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**Zondo commission – “I am looked at as a criminal,” says Duduzane**

Duduzane Zuma has told the commission of inquiry that the court of public opinion has rendered him a corrupt individual, despite the contrary being true, mainly due to the narrative put forward by the media over the years. He returned to the commission on Tuesday to wrap up his testimony.

“I am looked at as a criminal, I’m looked at as this face of corruption, this guy who has plundered trillions out of this country, which is not the case, by the way,” he said, when asked by his lawyer Advocate Piet Louw what impact have the allegations made against him by former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas had on him. “...I would just like to say to the public out there I’m not corrupt, I’ve not taken money from anybody, I never have, I never will.”

How the public takes it, he added, is not for him to decide.

The commission, said Zuma, is the first opportunity he has been given to state his version on record. Jonas placed Zuma in an October 2015 meeting in the Saxonwold home of the Gupta family, where he claimed Ajay Gupta – the eldest of the three brothers – offered him a bribe of R600-million. When testifying before the commission in August last year, Jonas further said things got physical between himself and Ajay when the latter started to threaten him with exposure of his alleged illegal dealings, when Jonas refused his offer. Zuma and businessman Fana Hlongwane, said Jonas, sat nearby in silence while this went on.

Zuma’s version, however, is that a meeting did take place, but it was only between himself, Jonas and Hlongwane, and it was to discuss a personal dispute between the other two men, while he played the role of mediator.

Louw spent some time reading out a *Sunday Times* article published in March 2016 claiming the events in Jonas’s version were true, and also quoting an unnamed source that reportedly told the paper that Jonas had confided in him.

Why then, asked Louw, did he (Jonas) not see fit to report to the police at the time?

Soon after the article was published, Oakbay Investments, a company in which both Zuma and the Guptas held interests at one time or another, released a media statement denying Jonas’s claims.

An investigation by former public protector Thuli Madonsela into allegations of state capture took on the allegations of Jonas, and several people were interviewed, including Ajay, to test their veracity. Zuma told the commission on Monday, however, that his turn never came, despite the report making its way to finality. He conceded that he got an invite from the public protector’s office, which soon afterwards

turned into a subpoena, but told them that he was not in the country and could not avail himself. By the time he had returned in the country and was available, the report had already been completed.

Commission chairperson Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo asked Zuma if, like Ajay, he had not considered taking the approach of forcing an interview with Madonsela to get his version across, to which he said no.

Furthermore, on the impact of the matter on his personal life, Zuma told the commission that from a business point of view there were consequences, but none like the legal ramifications that followed the public release of allegations by Jonas in March 2016.

Zuma was arrested in July last year, and despite many attempts by his lawyers at the time to get an understanding of the charges against him, these were never made clear by the police. All he knows is that they related to the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act, which renders one complicit to corruption that occurs in one's presence and is not reported. Zuma's argument is that Jonas too had the same obligation, but did not suffer the same fate. The charges against him were provisionally withdrawn, but Zuma is seeking legal recourse.

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