



15 March 2019

Zondo Commission – Jonas sticks to his story under cross-examination

Former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas has refuted claims by Duduzane Zuma that the only reason the latter drove him to the Gupta family home in Saxonwold on 23 October 2015 was to help call a truce between Jonas and Duduzane's long-time friend Fana Hlongwane, following rumours of a hostile relationship having recently developed between the two.

Jonas was back in the witness seat at the commission of inquiry into state capture on Friday to face cross-examination by Zuma's lawyers. Hlongwane had also been granted leave to cross-examine him, but was a no-show. According to Zuma, who was represented by Advocate Piet Louw, Hlongwane had told him some time before the meeting that there were rumours in common circles that Jonas was accusing him of blackmail. The purpose of the alleged blackmailing was not revealed.

Duduzane acknowledges Jonas's evidence that the two of them met at Rosebank's Hyatt hotel, before proceeding to Saxonwold in his car. Louw questioned the likelihood of Jonas, who had been at another meeting before he met Zuma, leaving his state car and bodyguards behind, to travel with Zuma, whom he testified he did not know very well. To this Jonas replied that he travels alone all the time, and it was not uncommon for him to leave his protectors behind.

Louw further questioned what he said was an inaccurate statement Jonas gave to the public protector in 2016, during an interview following his public revelations regarding the meeting. The two men spent some time debating whether the inaccuracies in the statement – which Louw argued was part of the report on the basis of which the state capture commission was established – were material or not. Part of his argument here was that upon meeting up with Zuma, Jonas knew that the two of them would later meet Hlongwane. Jonas testified previously that he was totally in the dark about why Zuma wanted to meet, or who else the two of them would be meeting.

Jonas in turn argued that had he had the obligation of signing the statement, he would have gone through each detail of it with a fine-tooth comb to ensure that there were no inaccuracies. Hlongwane's evidence noted that he and Jonas had both known the other would be there for their meeting. The only reason Jonas and Zuma moved from the Hyatt to a more private place was because Hlongwane worried that there would have been a confrontation between them, and a public space would not be suitable on that basis.

The issue of the statement made by Jonas to the Hawks, prior to the public protector interview, was also argued by Louw, who said that there were inaccuracies there too. Jonas stuck by his earlier evidence that both former Hawks head Berning Ntlemeza and another official General Zintle Mnonopi had tried to kill the case, citing that it would make the DA and Cope happy. Mnonopi, repeated Jonas, arrived at his office with a prepared statement that she asked him to sign. His lawyer, who was also present, contested the omission of a docket from the statement, and Mnonopi left Jonas's office to fetch it.

When asked by Louw why he did not go to the police to lay a charge after the Saxonwold encounter, Jonas said the environment was so hostile at that time that he did not trust the police.

Wim Trengove, representing Jonas, pointed out that in his cross-examination, Louw canvassed several important details except the actual content of the meeting in Saxowold. He also raised the point that following Jonas's public revelation of the meeting during a press briefing in March 2016, Oakbay Investments, a company owned by the Guptas, released a statement on behalf of the family, denying the meeting ever took place. He also questioned Ntlemeza's version, saying the High Court removed him from office after he was found to have committed perjury.

Useful links:

[Zondo Commission website](#)

Corruption Watch's [Zondo Commission update page](#)

[National Treasury](#)