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Zondo Commission – chairperson displeased with second McBride postponement

The chairperson of the commission of inquiry into state capture deputy chief justice Raymond Zondo on Monday slammed his legal team for its failure to adhere to the commission's rules regarding notices given to people implicated by witnesses who testify before the commission.

He was responding to an application by Advocate Paul Pretorius for a postponement of the much-anticipated testimony of Robert McBride, which had been scheduled for Monday, to Thursday. This, said Pretorius, was to give the legal team enough time to prepare people implicated by the former Ipid head – who are between 30 and 50 in number – enough time to apply their legal options to his evidence prior to his appearance before the inquiry.

The team sought another postponement, that of former KwaZulu-Natal Hawks head General Johan Booysen, for the same reason. His evidence will be heard next Monday, subject to McBride finishing on Friday as expected by Pretorius. He too implicates many people, said Pretorius. When tallied with those of McBride, there are almost 100. The required notices, he added, were to be sent out on Monday.

Zondo expressed his dissatisfaction with the reasons for the application, saying Pretorius's team had ample time to work on the notices, given that McBride's affidavit had been completed and submitted over six weeks ago. He had arrived at the inquiry on 18 February to testify, only for the legal team to ask for a postponement. The pressure on the commission, said Zondo, is to finish within the remainder of its prescribed time, and every hour counts. The request for a second postponement was therefore not acceptable.

"The bottom line is that we are in this situation where once again an application is made for the postponement of Mr McBride's evidence because, despite the fact that a postponement was granted on 18 February ... the legal team failed to make sure over a period of over six weeks the notices were sent to implicated persons," said Zondo.

"I appreciate that the legal team and everybody is working very hard and is very busy, but there is simply no excuse for this not having been done."

He added that there should be measures in place to make sure that this does not happen again.

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