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Zondo Commission – Zuma’s counsel objects to “unfair” line of questioning

Former president Jacob Zuma’s legal counsel has accused the head of the state capture commission’s legal team, Advocate Paul Pretorius, of trying to invoke certain emotions with his way of questioning. Zuma’s legal team objected to the line of questioning at this morning’s session, claiming Pretorius wants the commission chairperson, Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, to read something into it, and that Zuma was ambushed in an unfair cross-examination.

Thabani Masuku of Zuma’s legal team claimed the line of questioning falls outside the terms of references of the commission.

Pretorius was questioning Zuma about his role in the alleged request by the Guptas to channel government advertising funds to their new media company, the *New Age*.

Masuku told the commission that they had refused to submit a statement because their client had not been directly implicated in any wrongdoing. He further said that their client should not be questioned about phone calls that cannot support any implication in corruption or fraud. However, Pretorius interjected, saying the mentioned calls have suggestions of severe influence from the former president and it is only fair for the commission to give him a chance to debunk or admit those claims.

“As the legal team we have the duty to raise concerns when we see the manner in which our client has been questioned. It seems like Mr Pretorius is cross-examining Mr Zuma, cross-examining him about issues we are not clear about,” said Masuku.

Masuku told Zondo that Pretorius was not in fact helping Zuma to tell his version of the story. “He wants him to comment on phone calls he does not recall, he wants him to interpret meetings he was not part of. If he cannot say, for example, the meeting between Maseko and Ajay was inappropriate then people must read something into it, this is not fair.”

Zuma’s senior counsel requested the commission to be fair and stick to the terms of reference – but Zondo said he must remember that a commission is not like litigation in a court of law; in a commission everyone must be given a chance to tell their side of the story. Even that did not deter Masuku from

challenging the direction the commission was adopting and this led Zondo to call for an adjournment while he discussed the matter with both counsel in his chamber.

“If the commission views the assessment as an implication of Zuma then they must put the question to him and not ask about the meetings,” Masuku concluded.

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