

Slap on wrists for officials in Nkandla security upgrade saga

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SUSPENSIONS of no more than two months is all the 11 public works officials charged with flouting procurement procedures in the controversial security upgrades at President Jacob Zuma's Nkandla private residence will get.

The probe into the Department of Public Works (DPW) directors and project managers started four years ago and was concluded this week. More than R200 million was improperly spent on Zuma's private Nkandla residence.

DPW spokesperson Thamsanqa Mchunu said the employees were back at work and a confidential settlement agreement had been reached. The charges brought against the group stem from a 2014 Special Investigations Unit (SIU) report which revealed several tender irregularities during the project.

The officials were part of the bid adjudication committees that awarded the contracts but some testified they were in acting capacities or acting on behalf of their colleagues who were away or on sick leave when the decisions were made.

Public Service Association (PSA) KZN manager Claude Naicker would not reveal the contents of the agreement.

"The hearings were not dispensed with, as reported in the media. They went through the full process and the matter was amicably resolved with all parties mutually agreeing on the settlement," said Naicker.

According to sources, the DPW chose to settle and not continue with the disciplinary process because it had a weak case. "It would have been a bigger public embarrassment," said a source.

"Some could see from the

beginning that this was going to get out of hand but the department was desperate to be seen to be doing something because the whole country was watching."

Eight of the officials were reportedly given a month's suspension, while the director of the finance and supply chain, Thuli Ngubane, and project manager Jean Rindel, were given two months.

The Sunday Tribune learnt the suspensions would be without pay but deductions would be deferred over six months and all received verbal or written warnings.