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Author: GREG ARDE

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Former KwaZulu-Natal Public Works director Musa William Zondi is facing criminal charges after a disciplinary hearing found that a single company had been awarded R1,1 billion in contracts. The company, however, denies this.

In his report, which *GroundUp* has seen, the chairperson of the disciplinary hearing said Zondi, a key figure in the ANC in the province, was guilty of “blatant irregularity.”

Public Works MEC Martin Meyer said he had laid criminal charges.

Zondi was sacked from his post as director of supply chain management this month for gross negligence. He did not wish to respond to *GroundUp*'s questions.

Zondi (42), who hails from rural Kranskop, was the supply chain manager at KwaDukuza Municipality from 2013 to 2018. Prior to that, he worked in the municipal supply chain management department from 2011.

In May 2018, Zondi, then secretary of the KwaDukuza ANC Youth League, was elected regional secretary of the ANC in that region. In October that year, he was convicted and sentenced to 14 years in prison for the murder of a man who broke into a tuckshop owned by Zondi's family in Kranskop.

According to a police statement, a specialist task team cracked the case that led to the Pietermaritzburg High Court conviction of Zondi and four others for the 2015 murder of Thandani Mnomiya. Mnomiya's “severely battered body” was found near the road in the Ntunjambili area on the night of February 15, 2015.

The police said he was accused of breaking into the family tuckshop, where goods were stolen.

“He was then questioned and fatally assaulted,” SAPS said.

When Zondi was convicted, the ANC announced that he would take a leave of absence from his job as ANC regional secretary. Zondi appears to have immediately appealed against his conviction and sentence, though it is unclear whether he was ever incarcerated. Attempts to get clarity on this



Former KZN Public Works director Musa Zondi. **PHOTO: FACEBOOK**

from the National Prosecuting Authority were unsuccessful.

Correctional Services spokesperson Singabakho Nxumalo said Zondi was “on bail awaiting the outcome of an appeal”. A source in Correctional Services told *GroundUp*: “He didn't spend a day inside prison.”

In August 2022, Zondi was appointed head of supply chain management at Public Works, then headed by ANC MEC Nthuthuko Mahlaba.

Earlier this month, Martin Meyer — who became Public Works MEC in June last year — announced the dismissal of the department's supply chain management director.

Without naming Zondi, Meyer said in his statement that the director's “gross negligence” had cost the department millions of rands.

He said an investigation into Zondi had established that a single company had been awarded R1,1 billion (60% of the department's annual budget). Meyer said the company enjoyed an “unfair and unchecked monopoly.”

He said the supply chain director's job was to identify and mitigate risk while avoiding irregular expenditures during procurement processes.

GroundUp has seen the chairperson's report in the disciplinary inquiry into Zondi. It said an investi-

gation found documents missing in the procurement file and significant discrepancies between the services requested and those procured from Durban-based Ukuza Consulting.

The report said Zondi failed to conduct checks and balances and added that Ukuza was awarded 29 state contracts worth R1,1 billion.

According to the chairperson, apart from denying the allegations, Zondi did not respond to the accusations against him. The chairperson said Zondi was “acutely aware of blatant irregularity” in awarding a R17 million tender to a company owned by Ukuza director Chris Govender — even though a competing bid was millions lower.

He said Zondi had failed to identify and act on conflicts of interest in Govender's common directorships in different firms.

Meyer said he had laid criminal charges against Zondi, and the Hawks were investigating the case, which follows the suspension late last year of three other senior Public Works officials who also face criminal charges. Meyer would not be drawn on whether these cases were linked to Zondi.

ANC members have reportedly resisted moves to discipline Zondi.

A Public Works source told *GroundUp* that during Zondi's disciplinary

hearing, Meyer's office was approached by ANC members to broker an “apology” on Zondi's behalf.

Last week, Meyer told *GroundUp* he received a call on his mobile phone from a man posing as a Hawks general, demanding that he share details of the department's corruption investigation.

“The guy harassed me. Eventually, I told him to put his questions in writing and email them to my office.”

“When I checked with the Hawks to see if this general was real, they said the guy was fake. Some people are very interested in this.”

According to publicly available data, Zondi owns two properties near Hillcrest, west of Durban. He paid R2,3 million for one property on January 1, 2023, and R3,2 million for another in October 2023.

The KZN Legislature's Public Works Committee has welcomed Meyer's decision to lay charges against Zondi. Committee chair Nhlanhla Msimango said, “We will be monitoring developments closely.”

GroundUp sent Zondi a list of questions. He referred inquiries to his lawyer, who said: “Our client is exercising his legal rights regarding the media statement (by Meyer), and we are unable to comment.”

In response to questions, Ukuza's Chris Govender said he was unaware of any investigations and denied any relationship with Zondi.

He said in the past five years, Ukuza bid for 100 Public Works contracts and was awarded 13. Last year, Ukuza received R14 million worth of work from the department. So the claim that the company got 60% of the budget or R1,1 billion “makes no sense,” Govender said. He denied rigging the bids.

The ANC in KZN did not reply to questions about whether Zondi had stepped aside as a political office bearer, how long he had been on the party payroll, whether the party had taken any action to discipline or expel him in light of the conviction, and whether he was still a member of the ANC.

Repeated attempts to confirm that the Hawks were handling the investigation proved fruitless. — *GroundUp*.