

# ***Sunday Times* bribes accusation: So where's the evidence?**

In a front-page opinion article yesterday, the *Sunday Times* demanded the police hand over evidence that its journalists had accepted bribes. The weekly had made four applications under the Promotion of Access to Information Act on Friday (18 May 2012) to this end.



"We have written to the Minister of Police, Nathi Mthethwa, and the acting commissioner of police, Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi, making the same request," wrote the paper's editor, Ray Hartley.

"We await their response with keen interest."

Hartley promised the paper would "take the harshest action" against those implicated, if it was provided with evidence.

However, if no evidence was found, he demanded the authorities "repudiate this damaging rumour".

"The arrest, harassment, intimidation and surveillance of our journalists... has not stopped them from exposing corruption, maladministration and brutality," Hartley said.

He took grave offence at the allegation that *Sunday Times* journalists had been paid to "place" a story about Zimbabweans who had been arrested and illegally returned to their home country to face brutality and murder.

"I was there when that story was thoroughly checked, investigated for accuracy and published," he said, adding he was "extremely proud" of it.

## **Extremely serious allegations**

On Thursday, the SA National Editors' Forum (Sanef), said it had asked the police for more information about the allegations.

"These are extremely serious allegations," Sanef said in a statement.

"Unfortunately, they have been made without any supporting evidence being provided."

Sanef said it had written to Mkhwanazi asking him for more information about the allegations.

"We have asked General Mkhwanazi to provide us with the relevant evidence and any further relevant background so that we can arrive at a view on this matter which is informed by hard facts."

The front page and page two articles, published on 23 October 2011, did not have a journalist's byline, but carried the byline "Special Report by Investigation Staff".

The newspaper article was mentioned in an SA Police Service report by Colonel Kobus Roelofse addressed to the commander of the Anti-Corruption Task Team.

It was made public on Tuesday when it was lodged in the High Court in Johannesburg with other papers by the Freedom Under Law (FUL) non-profit organisation.

FUL, represented by former World Bank director Mamphela Ramphele, initiated the court action to interdict former Crime Intelligence boss Richard Mdluli from being given any responsibility in the police.

## **Fraud, corruption, murder, nepotism**

Last year, Mdluli faced fraud and corruption charges relating to alleged misuse of a crime intelligence fund, the purchase of luxury vehicles and the hiring of family members. He also faced a murder charge for the alleged murder of the boyfriend of his former girlfriend.

Both sets of charges were withdrawn and Mdluli was reinstated as head of crime intelligence.

On May 9, Mthethwa announced that Mdluli would be shifted from his position to another division.

In Roelofse's report, which is now online, he said a witness was interrogated by General Solly Lazarus, the head of finance for Crime Intelligence.

Others overheard them discussing the placement of a newspaper article. The article related to Hawks investigators Lt-Gen Anwa Dramat and Major General Shadrack Sibiya.

## **Paid to write biased articles?**

The article, which Hartley confirmed was about the Zimbabweans, named the Hawks investigators as the instigators of the renditioning.

The names mentioned in the articles were the same Hawks investigators looking into allegations of murder, fraud and nepotism by individuals in Crime Intelligence, especially Mdluli.

Roelofse said in his report that the witness stated that Lazarus "wanted to use sources within the media [journalists paid by Crime Intelligence]". These journalists would write stories to take the focus off them.

"This, according to the member, is a strategy employed to cast suspicion on those they perceive to be a threat."

Roelofse said (on page 17 of the report) that the article was used by Mdluli when he made a representation to the National Prosecuting Authority to cast suspicion on Dramat and the investigating team.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge