

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

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RE: ELECTRICITY THIEVES HANDED HEFTY SENTENCES

Judge Windell sitting in the Gauteng Local Division in Johannesburg yesterday sentenced four people in one of the biggest theft of electricity syndicates in excess of R5 000 000 loss of revenue by Eskom. They were sentenced as follows; Accused 1, Jeanette Chiliza (mastermind)) was sentenced to 18, 12 and 10 years respectively; Accused 2, Nqobile Chiliza was sentenced to 12 and 10 years respectively; Accused 8, Themba Dlamini was sentenced to 3 and 6 years respectively; Accused 9, Tlhaloganyo Mathews was sentenced to 3 and 6 years respectively. The sentences are to run concurrently.

The foursome were convicted by the high court on 16 451 counts of racketeering, electricity theft and theft of the Credit Dispensing Unit (CDU) during December 2016. They were arrested after Eskom investigators acted on a tip off from civilians about people selling prepaid electricity unlawfully. Upon investigating, a CDU, a hard drive, customer lists, printers, card readers and some Eskom supervisors' cards were discovered at the residence of Jeanette Chiliza. These devices are strictly for the use of Eskom officials only and were stolen from Eskom. They were used to override CDU and print/sell electricity vouchers. The vouchers were sold to the public at half price. The accused used fax machines and cell phones to communicate with each other. They further used cell phones to receive/send orders from/to the customers.

Accused 1 and 2 are the masterminds behind this sophisticated syndicate. Accused 1 was found guilty of managing the enterprise (racketeering in terms of POCA). She was further found guilty of participation (racketeering), theft of electricity and CDU together with accused 2, 8 and 9.

The onus was on State Advocate Jacob Serepo to prove the participation of the accused in the operation of the syndicate through their association (the enterprise). The state managed to do this by successfully arguing for the admission of the search and seizure

evidence, the cell phone messages, cell phone call data, evidence of the private investigators, fax evidence, forensic accounting report and the down report of the CDU.

Advocate Serepo argued that the matter must be viewed in a serious light especially since it negatively affects the provision of electricity to other consumers and the economy. Eskom lost millions of rands in revenue and that they had to spend a lot of money trying to curb these prevalent offences. The state argued that the offences are serious and are pre-planned. This was so because there is a misperception that the white-collar crimes are not serious. The state successfully argued that lengthy terms of imprisonment had to be imposed to serve as a deterrent to the accused and other would be offenders.

The NPA welcomes the sentence.

Kind Regards,

Hurbetin Phindi Louw

Regional Spokesperson: DPP South Gauteng

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