

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

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RE: FREE STATE COPS SENTENCED FOR CORRUPTION, RACKETEERING

The Free State High Court has yesterday slapped seven police officers with effective sentences ranging from six to 12 years imprisonment after they were found guilty of corruption, racketeering and contravention of the Immigration Act. Judge Martha Mbhele sentenced Philemon Moloi to a total of 174 years imprisonment. Malefetsane Khala was sentenced to 147 years in total. Lapapa Thithi got 201 years. Dumisane Matobako was sentenced to 207 years. Vincent Mokhitli was sentenced to 265 years. Modise Malefane and Edith Qasha were sentenced to 149 and 88 years in prison, respectively.

Moloi (32), Khala (33), Thithi (37), Matobako (35), Mokhitli (37) and Malefane (37) will each serve an effective sentence of 12 years after the judge ordered the sentences to run concurrently. Qasha will effectively serve six years.

The offences were committed between 31 March 2016 and 29 March 2017. The accused, who are all constables with the SAPS, were stationed at Ficksburg Port of Entry. Part of their responsibilities was to ensure that people departing from or coming into South Africa had valid travel documents.

A police operation made up of the Hawks, SAPS Crime Intelligence and the Specialised Commercial Crimes Unit was registered after the necessary authorisation in terms of Section 252A of the Criminal Procedure Act was obtained when it was suspected that the accused were allowing people without valid documents to cross the border.

The accused would charge between R100 and R250 to allow people without valid documents to cross the border. All the monies collected would be given to one of the accused during the shift and at the end of the shift, they would share the money amongst themselves. They would get between R100 and R2500 per day. The total amount of money they made from their corrupt activities is approximately R60 400.

The legal representatives of the accused requested the court to impose non-custodial sentences on the accused because of minimal amounts of money they benefitted. However, State Prosecutor, Advocate Mvuseni Ponye from the Specialised Commercial Crimes Unit, requested the court to impose sentences of direct imprisonment on the accused because they were police officers who were expected to preserve law and order and they had a responsibility of ensuring that everyone coming into South Africa has valid documents.

“It is not about the amount of money involved but about the criminal conduct of the police officers and the damage it caused to the country. Their criminal acts put the lives of many South Africans at risk. They did not care even if they were allowing fugitives from the law to come to South Africa. The only sentence the court could impose is a term of direct imprisonment”, said Ponye.

Judge Mbhele concurred with the prosecution that the only suitable sentence she can impose is a direct term of imprisonment on all the accused.

The Acting Director of Public Prosecutions in the Free State, Advocate Navilla Somaru has commended the good work done by the prosecution team of Advocate Ponye and Advocate Thokozile Zumane and the investigator from the Hawks, Captain Michael Kortman in ensuring that the accused are punished for their criminal deeds.

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