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DAY 4 OF “MATAVELE CASE” TRIAL

The Toyota Mark X owner says he lent the car to a friend and “brother in Christ” Nóbregas

On the fourth day, the Gaza Judicial Court concluded the hearings of the defendants accused of murdering Anastácio Matavele, questioning Inspector Justino Muchanga, Chief of Armaments at the sub-unit of the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR),

and Teacher Ricardo Manganhe, Toyota Mark X owner used in the attack.

In the place of Manganhe, it could have been the Mayor of Chibuto, Herinques Machava, the actual owner of the car, to answer before the jury. When his name was associated with





the homicide, “comrade Machava” replied by stating that he had already sold Mark X to Ricardo Manganhe, his subordinate in the municipality of Chibuto, awaiting only the exchange of ownership. And so he escaped the prosecution from the Public Prosecutor’s Office and completed another chapter of the long script designed to rule out any political motivation in the heinous crime committed a week before the 2019 general elections.

In fact, the story behind the purchase of the car is *sui generis*. On Friday, Manganhe said that, in April last year, he went to Millennium Bim to request for a consumer credit to purchase construction material and a car. However, it was only on August 29 that he paid Henriques Machava, 200 thousand meticaís, for the Toyota Mark X, remaining 50 thousand meticaís to be paid. When asked by Judge Ana Liquidão why he took almost four months with the money in his account to buy the car, Manganhe replied that the plan was to buy the car in South Africa, so it took him a long time to exchange meticaís for rands.

Even with the rands, he no longer traveled to South Africa and preferred to buy the car

in Chibuto, the city where he lives and works. The court did not ask him why he gave up on the South African market and under what circumstances he got to know that the Mayor was selling his car.

When asked about the type of payment, he replied that it was through a deposit in the account of Machava, at Millennium Bim. “Why didn’t you transfer the amount, if you both have accounts in the same bank,” questioned the court. “I had already bought the rands, but the car owner wanted the money in meticaís. Thus, I had to exchange the rands for meticaís and deposit it in his account”, he justified.

36 days after buying the Toyota Mark X, Manganhe lent it to his friend and “brother in Christ”, Nóbregas Chaúque, one of the police officers killed in a road accident that followed Matavele’s murder. He told the court that that was not the first time that Nóbregas asked for the car to take care of family issues and, being a “brother in Christ”, he never bothered to know what it was all about.

When the narrative script seemed faultless, here comes the first contradiction with the testimonies of the police officers Edson Silica

and Euclídio Mapulasse: Manganhe said that he gave the car to Nóbregas, on October 5, in the city of Chibuto, in a private act not witnessed by others. And that it was Nóbregas himself who took the Toyota Mark X because he had a driving license.

However, Silica (the Platoon driver) had already advanced that, on October 5, he was invited by his colleague Nóbregas to pick up the car which was parked near a school in the city of Xai-Xai. "When we arrived, nobody was there and I don't know who had left the car. Nóbregas handed me the keys, we got in the car and went to meet the other colleagues", said Edson Silica, on Wednesday's hearing.

When asked why Nóbregas was not the one driving the car, Edson Silica replied that his colleague did not have a driving license. And also: both Edson and Mapulasse said that they spent almost the entire day, October 5, with Nóbregas in the city of Xai-Xai, and did not

mention a trip by their colleague to Chibuto.

Manganhe told the court that he heard that his car had been used for murder and was afterward involved in an accident, through his colleagues who saw the information on social media. "They saw images of the accident and recognized my car through the license plate." Moments after learning about the facts, Manganhe switched off his cellphones because "he was receiving many calls from people who wanted to know what had happened". After an insistent question, he replied that he switched off his cellphones because "he was traumatized".

However, it was not because of the trauma that Manganhe did not seek to know the circumstances in which his car was used in the crime and afterward involved in a fatal accident: "I took no action because I knew I would be called by the authorities. The police had been at the accident scene and, through the owner of the car, would reach me".

Inspector Justino, the last to know of the events

He has been working as police for 32 years and is responsible for the UIR arsenal in Gaza. His testimony revealed weaknesses concerning the weapons control system in that special forces sub-unit. The control is done through a register where the exits and entrances of the weapons are recorded. The gunsmith on duty records, in the register, the number of both requested or returned weapons and the respective hours, the agent signs the register while picking up and returning it. "Who knows where the weapons are headed is the Platoon Commander. We only register the stocktaking and collection of weapons and are not involved in operational issues".

In the records, it is registered that on the night of 6 October, Agapito Matavele and Euclídio Mapulasse went to the arsenal to try to collect different weapons from those assigned to them. "Who was on duty was Daniel Carlos Maússe, a colleague. He called me to inform that two colleagues from GOE were requesting the weapons used by on-call officers. I said I shouldn't give it", he said, denying, however, that the episode had happened on the eve of Matavele's murder.

Despite being a strange request, Inspector Justino assumed that he did nothing to get clarification: he did not try to find out why the "GOE colleagues" wanted different weapons, neither with them nor their respective Commander; and he did not report the case to his superiors.

About Matavele's murder, he said he learned about it 24 hours later, since he was on his day off, on October 7. And it was on October 8 that he signed the return of two Norinco pistols. "I received instructions from the Army Chief of Staff to sign the register to confirm that the weapons were brought in. When I arrived, the weapons were already in the arsenal and I didn't know they had been used in the crime". The two weapons had been requested by Euclídio Mapulasse and Edson Silica in September, but no one from the arsenal noticed the delay concerning their returning.

By signing the return of the weapons, Justino Muchanga knows that he violated the internal regulations that, however, do not exist in the written version. "When the agents who took the weapons are unable to return them, it is the Platoon or Company Commander who must do

so. Agapito was not there and Tudelo could not sign because he was suspended”, he explained, without specifying the time when the GOE Commander was suspended.

It was only on October 10 that he did know that the weapons had been used in the murder of Matavele, when he was called to Gaza Province Prosecutor’s Office. “What did you do next? Did you speak to your superior? Did you ask him to inform SERNIC? Did you ask to open an investigation to clarify when and under what circumstances those weapons were collected?”, asked Flávio Menete, one of the lawyers for the Matavele family’s assistant. Inspector Justino did neither.

The questions of the former President of the Bar Association forced Elísio de Sousa to break

the silence: “I don’t want to intervene; he is not my constituent. But he is being mistreated and the court is being passive. I think there is injustice”, said the defender of police officers who are in custody.

After ending the interrogation of the defendants, the trial resumes next week with the hearing of the deponents. Tuesday is reserved for the victim’s family members; Wednesday will hear UIR agents and Zacarias Chichongue, the man who distributed Frelimo capulanas, T-shirts and caps to those involved in the murder; on Thursday will be the turn of the relatives of the two agents who died in the accident and, finally, on Friday, they will be “other deponents”, in the words of Judge Ana Liquidão.

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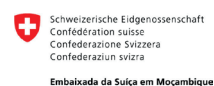
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