

DAY XVIII OF THE "HIDDEN DEBTS" SCANDAL TRIAL

Khessaujee Pulchand says all the money that went through his account was from Africâmbios, the exchange house where he worked

- Cashier at the exchange house called Africâmbios, Khessaujee Pulchand said all the money that went through his bank account domiciled at Millennium Bim was in the interest of his employers. The Prosecutor says about 360 million meticaís was moved between 2 January 2013 and 21 June 2018, including just over 13 million from M Moçambique Construções, a company owned by the defendant Fabião Mabunda. Khessaujee Pulchand said he opened the account in 2004 at the behest of the Africâmbios, and that he had no control over it. Apart from his salary paid in cash, he says he never benefited from the fact that the exchange house he worked for used his account to move large sums of money.



Khessaujee Pulchand

Khessaujee Ishwardas Pulchand, 40, an electronics engineer and at the time of the facts an employee at Africâmbios exchange house, was the 13th defendant to be heard by the court trying the “hidden debts” scandal. He is indicted of money laundering for having received a total of 13,480,000 meticaís from M Moçambique Construções in his account at Millennium Bim, as part of the amount received from the Prinvest group. To the first questions by the judge, the defendant said that he worked at Africâmbios as a cashier. His main role was to exchange currency up to five thousand dollars for each customer. But he also did some courier work, such as cashing cheques, although this task is not included in his contract.

He confirmed knowing defendants Naimo Quimbine and Simione Mahumane as colleagues at Africâmbios, a company with which he terminated his employment contract after suffering kidnapping attempts in 2018. He said he did not know Ângela Leão and Mbanda Anabela Buque Henning, and he only saw the two sisters on the television during the trial. He met the defendant Salvador Mabunda at the Faculty of Engineering at Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), where the two were students. Years later, Fabião Mabunda went to Africâmbios to buy dollars. “He said he wanted a large sum and as we cashiers could only sell up to five thousand dollars, I told him that he should go and negotiate with the management. I introduced him to the management. After that day, every day he came to Africâmbios he interacted directly with the management”, he explained.

When asked by the judge if he knew M Mozambique Construções company, owned by Fabião Mabunda, the defendant replied in the negative, stating that he never had any relationship with it. Based on that answer, he was confronted with bank information regarding the withdrawal of four cheques of 500,000 meticaís each, issued by M Moçambique Construções, to which Khessaujee Pulchand replied that, as an Africâmbios courier, he also withdrew cheques.

He was also confronted with two transfers made by M Moçambique Construções to his Millennium Bim account, the first amounting to 4,920,000 meticaís and the second one to 6,560,000 meticaís. He reacted as follows: “In 2004 we were ordered by the exchange house to open accounts at Millennium Bim. At first I thought they were salary accounts and I asked a colleague what the purpose of opening the accounts was. The answer was that it was normal in that exchange house to order workers to open bank accounts. The



Khessaujee Pulchand

cheque books for these accounts remained with the management. They only told me to write cheques. I didn’t use a card, neither a debit nor a credit card”. The defendant further explained that he was following orders from his employer and did not find anything strange.

According to the Prosecution, in Khessaujee Pulchand’s account domiciled at Millennium Bim bank, money totalling 359,430,625.43 meticaís was moved between 2 January 2013 and 21 June 2018. The transfers were made by several individuals and companies, including M Moçambique Construções. The Public Prosecutor questioned the defendant why he allowed his account to be used to transact large sums, to which he said that he had no knowledge of the money that was moved in his account. “It is difficult to know how much was transacted, moved or credited to my account. We had no knowledge of the balances and whenever the managers told us to ask for bank statements, we would hand them over in the sealed envelopes”.

The Public Prosecutor asked whether or not his account was used as a parallel cash box for currency conversion by Africâmbios, to which the defendant replied positively, adding that this occurred when transactions were over five thousand dollars. When asked if these transactions were legal, Khessaujee Pulchand said that he did not know. The transaction’s control above five thousand dollars was done exclusively by the exchange house management. The defendant said he did not know why the Africâmbios owners used parallel cash box, much less whether the exchange house held bank

accounts. When asked if these transactions were legal, he said no “I have no knowledge on the source of the amounts that were moved in my account. I was the account holder, but I was not the owner of the account. I did not feel I owned the account, so I never asked them to show me its statements or movements.”

In order to prove that the management of Africâmbios was the one who controlled the account opened by Khessaujee Pulchand at Millennium Bim, Alice Mabota, the defendant’s lawyer, requested the addition to the process of a control map of the amounts that were moved in that account. The defendant explained that he obtained that transaction control map from one of the managers of the exchange house. “When I was arrested, my family put pressure on Africâmbios and he sent to my email the transaction control map made in my account. He said it is a document that could help in my defense.”

It is stated in the case that Naimo Quimbine, another defendant who at the time of the facts worked at Africâmbios, withdrew 12 cheques with a total amount of 5,682,907.38 meticaís, all of them issued by the M Moçambique Construções Company, of Fabião Mabunda, between 6 September 2013 and 8 May 2015. During the pre-trial phase of the case, Naimo Quimbine have explained that the 12 cheques were handed to him by his colleague Pulchand, and that it was to him who handed the cash money. Yesterday, Khessaujee confirmed that it was him who handed the cheques to his colleague Naimo Quimbine, adding that he did so at the behest of the management of the exchange house. “My bosses did not speak Portuguese and

I acted as their translator. Sometimes they asked me to give cheques to colleagues to withdraw money at the bank. That is what happened in relation to Naimo Quimbine.

In the defense challenge by his lawyer during the contradictory statement, the defendant confirmed having received money from M Moçambique Construções in his Millennium Bim account and asked to be held responsible only for the amount he received, of 1,500,000 meticaís. Faced with the challenge, Khessaujee Pulchand said he was never aware of the document. "At the time of the contradictory statement there was a little confusion. My lawyer was Doctor Zelma Vasconcelos and she issued several documents for my defense, but they were not accepted by the court.

They said that she could not defend myself, so the court appointed a public defender called Herculano. He was the one who signed this plea. I did not see this

plea, I never told him that. How could I take responsibility for something I didn't do? He questioned!

In addition to the account held at Millennium Bim, the defendant said he opened three (3) more accounts at Moza Banco, Standard Bank and Barclays, at the behest of the Africâmbios owners. The Bar Association of Mozambique (OAM), an assistant to the case, asked why he accepted to open three more bank accounts, even though he knew the first one opened at Millennium Bim was not serving his interests. The defendant said that he was following his employers orders and that he never sought to know why Africâmbios used his bank accounts for foreign exchange transactions. He further said that apart from his salary, he had no benefit from Africâmbios using his accounts, nor does he know whether Africâmbios earned anything by using his workers' accounts.

To a question from OAM, represented by lawyer Vicente Manjate, he said that he received his salary in cash and that the only bank account that was under his control is a student account. "I used to make some deposits in my student account. And I used it more to pay university expenses and to buy books as I benefited from discounts." Khessaujee Pulchand was arrested in 2019, a year after he stopped working for Africâmbios. He says that when his former employers learnt of his arrest and that it was related to events that occurred during his time as an Africâmbios worker, they promised to provide a lawyer to defend him.

After the usual Wednesday interruption, the trial resumes tomorrow, Thursday, with the hearing of two more defendants who at the time of the facts worked at the exchange house Africâmbios, namely Simio- ne Mahumane and Naimo Quimbine.



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