

DAY LV OF THE "HIDDEN DEBTS" SCANDAL TRIAL

“I have always acted on verbal and written orders from Antonio Carlos de Rosario,” Bilal Sidat, Chairperson and financial director of the companies Txopela, Anlaba, Pantera and Taty

- Bilal Sidat, an accountant and manager by profession, went to the tent set up in the maximum security prison (B.O) to deconstruct the narrative of the defendant António Carlos de Rosário, according to which he was not the owner and that he was not in charge of a set of companies suspected of having received money from the Privinvest group. The declarant said that in January 2014, he was hired by the defendant to manage four companies allegedly linked to the State Intelligence and Security Service (SISE), namely Txopela Investments, Anlaba Investimentos, Pantera Investimentos and Taty Property, but that he never found that they had a connection to state security.



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Bilal Sidat said that he made transfers to companies at the behest of António Carlos do Rosário, with particular emphasis to a payment of about USD 20,000.00 to João Carlos Fortes, who is alleged to be the defendant's brother-in-law.

In addition to this payment, he revealed that, still under orders from António Carlos do Rosário, he made other payments for real estate investments; one for the company Halid, amounting to 10 million meticais. Another payment was for DECO Residence, amounting to approximately 1,400,000 euros, also intended for real estate. Just over two million euros were also transferred to the company M Moçambique Construções, of the defendant Fabião Mabunda, for the construction of a property development at Costa do Sol area, in Maputo City.

There is also a payment to the company SAFA Import and Export, of about 16,182,000 meticais, which was aimed at the acquiring real es-

tate, namely a real estate project in the Zimpe-to area, in Maputo City. Still in the capital of the country, the declarant said he received orders to pay IMOMOSE an amount of three million euros, via bank transfer, relating to the purchase of apartments in the building Xenon Urban, located on Julius Nyerere Avenue.

On many occasions, the declarant said he did not have details of the operations, as operational matters were handled by Caice Salé, who is incidentally Antonio Carlos de Rosario's wife, and legal or contractual matters were handled by lawyer Imran Issa. However, the defendant Antonio Carlos do Rosário had denied ownership of most of the investments reported by the declarant Bilal Sidat. In fact, Mr Rosário had always insisted that the real estate assets were owned by the company IRS, a company with origins in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, even with regard to IRS, the declarant was surprised in Court when he was shown a memorandum of association of Txopela, where he appears as a signatory and shareholder on behalf of IRS company. Bilal Sidat said that he had never seen such a document and that his signature had been forged.

"What I can say is that this is a hammering (falsified)," the declarant said, adding that at the time Txopela was formed (September 2013) he did not even know of the company's existence, as he was asked to send his CV by Antonio Carlos de Rosario on 17 January 2014, and started working for the four aforementioned companies on 20 January 2014.

When he started working at Txopela Investments, in 2014, Bilal Sidat was receiving 120

thousand meticais per month. He ended his duties in 2019 with a monthly salary of 130 thousand meticais. An important fact advanced by the declarant is that most of the salaries he received were in cash, directly from António Carlos de Rosário, and in a few cases he received his salary by cheque.

In fact, Txopela looked like an informal sector company as the declarant did not have a written contract, he started working on the basis of a gentleman's agreement to take over such important functions as CEO and financial administrator of four companies.

The declarant confirmed that Txopela benefited from a transfer of 43 million meticais from the Treasury (Ministry of Finance). There is also a transfer of about €10 million from abroad. According to Bilal Sidat, the funds transferred from abroad came from IRS and were intended to materialise a contract for the acquisition of shares in Txopela Investments.

Meanwhile, the declarant said that until he left in 2019, the commercial certificate did not reflect the entry of IRS in Txopela shareholder structure, despite the agreement made between the parties and which provided for an increase in the capital of the Mozambican company from 10 to 430 million meticais.

Because he did not finish his hearing, Bilal Sidat will return tomorrow, Monday, 6 December to answer questions from the assistant (Mozambique Bar Association - OAM) and the defendants' lawyers. On the same day, Inram Issa, former lawyer of António Carlos de Rosário, and Caice Salé, one of the former employees of Txopela Investments, are expected to be heard.

Horácio Chongo went to Court to confirm sale of backhoe loader to defendant Fabião Mabunda

Horácio Chongo was the first declarant heard last Friday by the Court. He has been an employee of the company Máquinas e Tractores de Moçambique for over a decade. Working as a salesman, he had to attend to the defendant Fabião Mabunda, who purchased a backhoe loader amounting at five million meticais.

Horácio Chongo told the Court that the defendant preferred that the receipt resulting from the deal be written in his name and not in the name of the company M Moçambique Construções. He also transported the equipment personally to Matola Rio (Maputo Province), which meant that it did not incur additional costs.

However, Fabião Mabunda went only once to buy the accessories for the backhoe loader, which caused the defendant to lose the one-year warranty on the machine for failing to comply with what was established in the sales contract provided by the company Máquinas e Tractores de Moçambique.

The Judge rejects application to rectify order revoking the hearing of Jean Boustani

Before Horácio Chongo spoke, the defence of defendant António Carlos de Rosário requested the rectification of the order revoking the hearing of Jean Boustani, which was scheduled for Friday. Judge Efigénio Baptista refused to rectify the revocation of the hearing of the Privinvest manager, arguing that the law provides for the rectification of the judgment or order when it is found that there was a spelling error, the designation of a particular subject to the process, reference to a date or other error that is easily amendable upon request of any of the subjects of the case.

The judge held that Isálcio Mahanjane, a lawyer to the process, is free to appeal to the order made by him in other instances, if he does not agree with his arguments used to revoke the hearing of Jean Boustani, described as responsible for paying bribes to the defendants now on trial.

Even so, the judge acknowledged that the António Carlos de Rosário lawyer may have chosen "the shortest way" approach, on the grounds that a favourable decision in the appellate Court to have Boustani heard may come late, such that it would not have the desirable effect on the ongoing proceedings. By way of example, the judge may grant the application for Boustani to be heard on a suspensive basis, meaning that such an order would only go to the other reviewing court on appeal after the judgment in the present case is delivered.



EDITORIAL INFORMATION

Property: CDD – Centro para Democracia e Desenvolvimento
Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor: Emídio Beula
Author: Emídio Beúla
Team: Emídio Beula, Julião Matsinhe, Dimas Sinoa, Américo Maluana
Layout: CDD

Address:
 Rua de Dar-Es-Salaam Nº 279, Bairro da Sommerschild, Cidade de Maputo.
 Telefone: +258 21 085 797

CDD_moz
E-mail: info@cddmoz.org
Website: http://www.cddmoz.org

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