

IN THE HIGH COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA
EASTERN CAPE DIVISION, GQEBERHA

CASE NUMBER: CC19/2024

IN RE:

THE RE-OPENED INQUEST INTO THE DEATHS OF
MATTHEW GONIWE, FORT CALATA, SICELO MHLAULI
AND SPARROW MKHONTO

WITNESS STATEMENT: BAREND JACOBUS DU PLESSIS

I, the undersigned,

BAREND JACOBUS DU PLESSIS

do hereby make oath and state that:

1.

- 1.1 I am an adult male and a pensioner, I am 86 years of age. I retired from the position of Minister of Finance of the Republic of South Africa on the 31st of March 1992.



1.2 The facts contained in this affidavit fall, unless otherwise indicated, within my personal knowledge and are both true and correct.

INTRODUCTION:

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I was requested to attend the inquest relating to the deaths of Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sicelo Mhlauli and Sparrow Mkhonto ("Cradock 4") in the above Court and to testify and disclose all and/or any facts falling within my personal knowledge relating to the deaths of the Cradock 4.

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In order to assist the Honourable Court in the above regard I instructed my legal team to prepare an affidavit on my behalf wherein I will deal with the relevant issue and to disclose any involvement that I had or may have had in this regard.

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At the outset I wish to emphatically deny that I had any involvement and/or knowledge relating to the planning and/or execution of the murders of the Cradock 4.



PERSONAL BACKGROUND:

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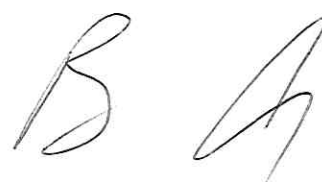
In November 1983, I was appointed Minister of Education and Training, I thereby became both Cabinet Minister and member of the State Security Council.

Noteworthy figures from the records of the Ministry of Education and Training at that time, are as follows:

- The median age of matriculants then was 19 years and 10 months.
- The Department had 40 000 teachers in its employ of whom half were below the age of 30 years.
- Our learners were all from areas outside the erstwhile "Homelands", totalled at least 1.5 million and annually increased very rapidly.

Our schools were scattered all over the country, making matters like sound management oversight a formidable challenge.

Disciplinary committees and prescribed procedures to ensure dealing fairly and consistently with all kinds of transgressions in schools and the Department, had already been in operation long before my arrival. Repetitive violations were regarded as aggravating circumstances.

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Before implementation, the Director General was obliged to discuss more serious transgressions and judgements with his minister as part of the usual ministerial oversight and confirmation regulations.

To my best recollection, the Disciplinary structure then operated along the following lines:

1. Category 1: Serious transgressions: forfeiting remuneration for a period.
2. Category 2: More serious transgressions: suspension from service for some time, without salary.
3. Category 3: Very serious transgressions: removal to another school in the same town or city.
4. Category 4: Extremely serious transgressions: removal to another school in another town or city.
5. Category 5: Repeated serious transgressions: Dismissal.

While dealing with countrywide cases from Category 4 during a Disciplinary Review meeting that I assume took place in November 1983 between the Director General and me, he submitted for consideration, the particulars of a teacher in Cradock whose name had come up for removal to Graaff Reinet. The teacher had appeared before the relevant Disciplinary Committee on account of spending excessive school time on political activities elsewhere instead of being in the classroom. He added that it was an unfortunate event for the school, because the teacher, Mr Matthew Goniwe, was a good



mathematics educator. However, despite earlier cautionary notices to Mr. Goniwe, he had persisted with this behaviour, and the situation had reached a stage that had become detrimental to operations in the rest of the school, making his removal inevitable. I later learned that he had refused the transfer to Graaff Reinet.

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I was Minister of Education and Training for only ten months, from November 1983 to 17 September 1984, when I was appointed Minister of Finance. I have been informed that the murder took place on 27 June 1985, nine months after I had become Minister of Finance, during which time I believe Mr Goniwe had been arrested and relocated to various locations several times.

It has been brought to my attention that during 1984 there was a decision by the State Security Council that the agitators under which Mr Goniwe resorted should be removed from the school. This removal would have been in terms of Category 4 of the structure, which operated in the department at that stage.

Due to the long time that has passed since then, I cannot, out of my own will, remember the day, or specific date, but it has been brought to my attention that the meeting took place on the 19th of March 1984.

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On 17 September 1984 I was appointed Minister of Finance. The portfolio of Education and Training was then transferred to Mr Sam de Beer, Deputy Minister to Dr Gerrit Viljoen, the then Minister of National Education. The murder took place on the 27th of June 1985, after Mr. Goniwe had been arrested and relocated to various locations numerous times.

INVOLVEMENT IN CRADOCK 4:

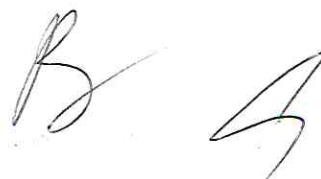
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Never in my entire span of 18 years' Parliamentary service and having been a Cabinet minister, member of the State Security Council and many other committees, sub-committees and working groups, was I ever involved in or aware of the mere mentioning of the possible killing of any person opposed to the State.

I therefore wish to record my strongest possible personal umbrage at even the slightest suggestion that I in any way was involved in any aspect of the murder of the Cradock4.

CONCLUSION:

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I repeat my emphatic denial of any involvement and/or knowledge of the planning and/or execution of the killing of the Cradock 4.


" DEPONENT

SIGNED and SWORN to at Pretoria on this 12th day of **MARCH 2026** by the Deponent who stated that:

1. He knows and understands the contents of the declaration; and
2. He has no objection to taking the prescribed oath; and
3. He considers the prescribed oath as binding on his conscience.

And Government Notice Regulation 1258 as amended by the Government Notice Regulation 1648, Government Notice Regulation 1428 and Government Notice Regulation 773 was fully complied with.


COMMISSIONER OF OATHS

FULL NAMES:
BUSINESS ADDRESS:
AREA:
DESIGNATION:

GERHARD COETSEE
COMMISSIONER OF OATHS
PRACTISING ATTORNEY, RSA
293 GEOFF STREET
GARSFONTEIN, PRETORIA
012 329 9669

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