

NPA dealing with Steinhoff matter without fear or favour

Justice Minister Ronald Lamola says the National Prosecuting Authority is prioritising the Steinhoff matter and that it is dealing with it without fear, prejudice or favour.



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The Minister said this when the Peace and Security Cluster replied to oral questions during a hybrid sitting of the National Assembly on Wednesday.

“The NPA is dealing with this matter without any fear, prejudice or any favour to anyone. It is also dealing with it without looking at the colour of the person who is involved as per the mandate of the NPA and they are prioritising the matter as I have said that it is being handled in a manner that all matters go through,” he said.

The Minister’s remarks comes amid reports that German prosecutors are on the verge of making an announcement in relation to their multi-year probe into accounting fraud at Steinhoff this week.

Back at home, the NPA and the Hawks are jointly conducting a separate probe to get to the bottom of an audit investigation that found that ahead of CEO Markus Jooste’s abrupt resignation in 2017, Steinhoff had been allegedly inflating its profits between 2009 and 2017.

During the National Assembly sitting, the EFF's Mbuyiseni Ndlozi had asked Lamola to furnish reasons why the NPA has refused or delayed charging Jooste with insider trading, fraud and corporate corruption.

Lamola said these kinds of complex investigations do take time.

"We must [not] come here and lie that these kind of investigations can be done within a day. Even any type of investigation, even the one she referred to, has taken many years to be completed, including the case of J Arthur Brown (Fidentia) that took about six years for the investigation to be completed, but in the end, justice was done. Even the Trifactor case took about seven years, but in the end justice was served.

"Also in this matter, justice is going to prevail."

He said the NPA and the Hawks are working together to ensure that the investigation is done in a thorough manner and that by the time they take a decision, it is informed by the facts and that it is also informed by the law.

"It is not informed by the colour, orientation or the political views of any individual."

Lamola said the investigation on the matter in question has been ongoing since early 2018.

"It is a highly complex investigation involving a forensic investigation into thousands of foreign and local transactions, requiring various applications for Mutual Legal Assistance requests relating to different bank accounts in various countries and jurisdictions to be made.

"Furthermore, the Financial Sector Conduct Authority's (FSCA) investigation into allegations of insider trading was recently finalised. The case docket for the criminal investigation into possible insider trading against the suspects was registered by the Directorate of Priority Crime Investigations (DPCI).

"A team of prosecutors is guiding such an investigation, and the team of investigators has been enhanced, in line with the decision to prioritise the matter.

"Once investigations are finalised, the suspects will be charged with all the charges the State intends to bring against them in one trial."

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