

## ■ NATIONAL

## Raymond Zondo shoots down accusations of 'captured judiciary'

He has for the past four years been calling for evidence, but none has come to light, the chief justice says

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Chief justice Raymond Zondo says there is no evidence that the judiciary has been captured. Picture: X/RSA JUDICIARY

Chief justice Raymond Zondo has defended the judiciary against allegations of “capture”, saying he has for the past four years called for evidence, but none has come to light.

Zondo was addressing the three-day judges' conference at Sun City, North West, on Tuesday.

His reiteration of the lack of evidence that the judiciary is captured comes a week after UDM leader Bantu Holomisa wrote to the joint standing committee about a “damning report on judicial corruption” allegedly written by recently resigned state security director-general Thembisile Majola.

The State Security Agency distanced itself from the “so-called intelligence report”.

Zondo, no stranger to systematic capture of institutions as he headed the inquiry into state capture for four years, says accusations of capture in the judiciary are false.

“We have been accused of being captured, but it is an accusation that we reject with the contempt it deserves. For four years, I called for everyone who has evidence that the judiciary in SA is captured to come forward, and no-one came with any evidence,” he said.

Zondo said there is no proof that South Africans have no trust in the judiciary.

“No evidence has been put forward to support any such allegations or accusations. Under our democracy the independence of the judiciary is provided for in our constitution.”

Zondo said one of the ways the justice department has worked to avoid possible influence of judges has been by handling and funding educational training of judges in-house.

“We have the SA Judicial Education Institute, which provides training to judges. This is very important because it enables us to ensure that we do not send judges to receive training in institutions that are not controlled by us and where we might not know where funding comes from and what agendas those providing funding might have.”

Speaking about accountability in the judicial sector in the past 30 years, Zondo said the Judicial Service Commission played a key role in addressing misconduct of judges.

“For many years, there were no clear systems to hold judges accountable for unacceptable conduct and for conduct such as undue delays in handing down judgments. It took more than 15 years after the advent of our constitutional democracy and amendments were made to the Judicial Service Commission Act to establish the judicial service committee, which processes complaints against judges,” he said.

“This is one of the institutions we have created over the past 30 years to make sure members of the public with complaints against judges

have a place to file those complaints. Under apartheid there was no such body.”

In October, EFF leader Julius Malema was in the spotlight after accusing magistrate Twanet Olivier’s judgment in his case with bodyguard Adriaan Snyman of being influenced by politicians.

Malema had appeared before Olivier with Snyman on charges of discharging a firearm during the EFF’s fifth birthday celebration at Mdantsane’s Sisa Dukashe Stadium in 2018. He called her incompetent.

The justice ministry and the organisation Judges Matter condemned the red berets leader, saying his claims were without substantiation and irresponsible.

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