

## Over one year later . . . Mntonga death: Senior Ciskei police officers on trial

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he was handcuffed behind his back. He was told that W/O Bojana was torturing Mr Mntonga at the time. After Major Potwana had left, W/O Bojana telephoned him and told him Mr Mntonga was dying. Major Potwana returned to the office and found W/O Bojana trying to resuscitate Mr Mntonga. In an emotional outburst during the bail application, General Zandisele Ngwanya said that he was not the killer. He named W/O Bojana as a killer before pointing at a member of the investigating team in the public gallery. "There is W/O Gola," he said. "He is a killer."

"Even Brigadier Zibi, the investigating officer, is fully aware of who the killers are."

"They arrested the wrong people deliberately in order to defeat the ends of justice."



Eric Mntonga

The bail application was opposed on the grounds that people were very angry about the murder and might take the law into their own hands if the accused were released.

Major Mthuthulezi Hlela, head of the murder and robbery squad in Ciskei, testified for the state in opposing the bail application. Major Hlela said a docket for the case had been opened after Mr Mntonga's death in July 1987. The investigation was conducted by Colonel Feliti.

TWO Ciskei police generals, including the head of the security police, are among six Ciskei policemen arrested in connection with the death of IDASA's co-director of the Border region, Mr Eric Mntonga.

Those arrested and presently facing charges in connection with Mntonga's death include Major-General Zandisile Witness Ngwanya (42), Major-General Phakamile Ngcanga (50), Colonel Mabandla Mbejeni (47), Major Phikeleli Potwana (42), Warrant Officer Thamsanqa Hlulani (31) and Warrant Officer Khayaletu Ncandana (34).

Mr Mntonga was found dead on a lonely road near King William's Town in July last year, the day after he had been summoned to appear at the Tamara police station in Ciskei.

The arrest of the six policemen followed a letter of protest sent to President Sebe by the Executive Director of IDASA, Dr Alex Boraine.

Testifying in an application for bail, Major-General Zandisile Witness Ngwanya, second-in-command of the Elite unit in the Ciskei police, said he wanted it to be known that Mr Mntonga's killers were all "outside" and that innocent people had been arrested.

Ciskei's Deputy Attorney-General, Mr V. Notshe, opposed the bail application.

General Ngwanya denied he had been involved in the killing of Mr Mntonga and claimed that some of the killers were members of the investigating team. He alleged that the people responsible for Mr Mntonga's death were Warrant Officer Bojana, Warrant Officer Mncono, Captain Hlela and other policemen he did not know. He said there were fifteen policemen in the office where the interrogation took place, among them Warrant Officer Soci, who was now a member of the investigating team.

General Ngwanya accused the leader of the investigating team, Brigadier Fikele Zibi, of favouritism by not arresting Warrant Officer Bojana. He also said that the head of the security branch in Mdantsane, Brigadier L Nhonho, should have been charged as well because Mr Mntonga's killers were working under his command.

He told the court that Major Potwana had told him that he had gone to the police offices where he found Mr Mntonga being suffocated with a piece of plastic while

An inquest was concluded without any arrests having been made.

The case was handed over to Major Hlela at the beginning of September 1988 and he made his first arrest — that of General Ngwanya — on 10 September.

Major Hlela opposed bail on the grounds that the accused would interfere with State witnesses or abscond; it was easy to flee from Ciskei even without travel documents. Major Hlela pointed out that all the police witnesses were juniors to General Ngwanya and some of them had worked under him in his office.

Major Hlela told the court that he had difficulty gathering evidence in the case and it seemed that the accused had withheld information. The accused had concealed information on the case since July last year and it was easy for them to destroy evidence if they were allowed out on bail.

Major Hlela also pointed out that the public was deeply concerned about Mr Mntonga's death and wanted justice to be done. Evidence of this was the packed courtroom every time the matter was heard.

The magistrate, Mr Ayanda Njozela, in refusing bail said there was a possibility that General Ngwanya could interfere with the State witnesses. It was clear that General Ngwanya had an intimate knowledge of the case since he had, in his evidence, named some of the State witnesses as conspirators in the crime. He had also told the court of the names of the alleged perpetrators of the crime and had gone as far as to name the actual killer as W/O Bojana.

Mr Njozela said General Ngwanya was aware of the contents of the letter from Dr Alex Boraine which had opened the "can of worms". Information had been suppressed for more than a year and General Ngwanya had contended that he had suppressed information, Mr Njozela said.

He refused bail and the case was postponed to October 14 for the Attorney-General's decision. All the accused were remanded in custody.

After the adjournment of the court, people in the public gallery, numbering about 300, went outside and lined the street outside the court building. They jeered as the six accused were driven away to Middeldrift prison in four police cars accompanied by a Casspir.