
Carlos Cardoso murder trial update

16th December

Car thief denies all

Maputo, 16 Dec (AIM) - One of those accused of stealing the car used in the murder of Mozambique's top investigative journalist, Carlos Cardoso, on Monday denied all the statements he had earlier made to the police.

Mario Matola is not charged with Cardoso's murder. But the prosecution alleges that he was one of three men who, on 29 July 2000, stole a red Citi-Golf at gunpoint. That car was later used by the death squad who gunned Cardoso down on 22 November 2000..

The prosecution says that the two men accompanying Matola in the robbery, Anibal dos Santos Junior ("Anibalzinho") and Manuel Fernandes ("Escurinho"), later took part in the murder.

Matola was called upon to testify in the murder trial merely to link Anibalzinho with the Citi-Golf. But Matola told the Maputo City Court "I don't know anything about any Citi-Golf", and claimed that his earlier confession had been forced out of him by the police. He said he had been a friend of Anibalzinho and Fernandes since childhood "but I never did any business with either of them".

So how was it that he had signed a confession to the car theft? "I was in Kaya-Kwanga (a Maputo hotel) drinking whisky, and Frangoulis (Antonio Frangoulis, former head of the Maputo Criminal Investigation Police) forced me to sign a document", claimed Matola.

"So when you drink whisky, you don't think straight?", asked the presiding judge, Augusto Paulino.

"I didn't have a chance", protested Matola. "I was surrounded by Frangoulis's men. They were armed".

The prosecuting attorney, Mourao Baluce, then read out Matola's earlier statements. In them, he had admitted, not only to the theft of the Citi-Golf, but to a string of other car thefts.

He told the police that Anibalzinho made a living by trafficking in stolen cars: cars stolen in South Africa were sold in Mozambique, and cars stolen in Mozambique were sold in South Africa.

Matola could list the Nissans, Pajeros, and Land Rovers that he had stolen. The guns he used, he said, were an AK-47 rifle and a Makarov pistol, both belonging to Anibalzinho.

He told the police he had come to blows with Anibalzinho in October 2000 over payment. After this, Anibalzinho met him outside the Unicambios foreign exchange bureau (owned by Ayob Abdul Satar, one of those charged with ordering the assassination of Cardoso), and paid him ten million meticais (about \$420) on the spot. He promised Matola a further ten million, but this money was never paid.

When the reading was finished, and Paulino asked Matola if he had any comment, he exclaimed "I didn't say any of that. Frangoulis forced me to sign it".

When the judge reminded Matola that the court has these police interviews on tape, he changed his story and claimed it had all been dictated to him. "I've been locked up here for two years, I didn't do anything", he shouted. "I never killed anyone".

Matola's exclamations included insulting terms such as "porcaria" (which roughly translates as "pigshit"), leading Paulino to remark "if you weren't in prison already, I'd order your detention".

The court also heard the statement from the owner of the Citi-Golf, Carlos Lelio da Silva. Court officials have been unable to locate Silva, and he may no longer be in Mozambique. So the statement he made during the initial investigation was read into the record.

He said that on 29 July 2000, three men in a Nissan saloon cut in front of him forcing him to stop. Two of them jumped out, armed with AK-47s. He described the assailant who pointed a gun at his head and ordered him out of the car as "a tall, athletic black man". The adjectives certainly fit Mario Matola.

Two other witnesses testified that Anibalzinho took a red Citi-Golf to the car park of the Anuari mosque in central Maputo.

The mosque manager, Issa Gulamo, said he thought the car had been left there for about a fortnight.

Security guard Emilio Simoes recalled Anibalzinho bringing the car to the park. But when he took the car out again, he refused to pay the parking fees, and assaulted Simoes' colleague who demanded payment.

The prosecution argues that the car was parked first at the mosque car park, and later at the park of the Auto-Edil company, from where it was removed on 19 November 2000, just three days before Cardoso's murder.

Witness confronts Nini Satar

Maputo, 16 Dec (AIM) - Maputo money lender Momade Assife Abdul Satar ("Nini") on Monday denied bribing a witness in the Carlos Cardoso murder case to change his story.

Osvaldo Muianga ("Dudu") originally told the police that he had attended meetings at the Rovuma Hotel in central Maputo at which Nini Satar, his brother Ayob, and former bank manager Vicente Ramaya, had plotted the assassination of Cardoso (as well as a second attempt on the life of prominent lawyer Albano Silva).

But in January 2002 Muianga changed his story, and wrote a document denying all his earlier claims. (He has subsequently retracted that retraction, and now claims that meetings in the Rovuma did take place, but only discussed murdering Albano Silva, not Carlos Cardoso).

A prosecution witness, Gerry Opa Manganhela, claims that Muianga changed his story in January, because Nini Satar offered him a bribe of \$50,000. Opa says he was used as a go-between, since he was being moved from the top security prison, to the civil prison in the centre of the city where Muianga was being held.

Opa was serving a sentence for firearms offences, and had struck up what he claims was a close relation with Satar in the top security jail. Opa is currently enjoying conditional freedom, after serving half of his ten year sentence.

At the request of Satar's lawyer, Eduardo Jorge, the presiding judge, Augusto Paulino, confronted Satar with Opa.

Satar described Opa's claims as "pure lies", and claimed the timing was wrong - that Opa was transferred to the civil prison after Muianga had made his retraction. Opa insisted that the changes to Muianga's original statement "were written by Nini, Ayob and Ramaya". After accepting the bribe offer, Muianga "came to my cell and asked how he could receive the money. I said it could only go via his mother".

Opa also claimed he had witnessed a fight in the prison between Satar and Anibal dos Santos Junior ("Anibalzinho"), the man who allegedly organised the death squad that murdered Cardoso. Anibalzinho was illicitly freed from prison on 1 September, and is being tried in absentia.

The dispute was supposedly over money that Satar owed Anibalzinho. Opa claimed he heard Anibalzinho say "Nini, give me that money, or I'll screw you". Anibalzinho then punched Satar in the stomach, and Opa and a policeman intervened to separate the two.

"Nini told me he was Anibalzinho's boss", said Opa, but he was angry with Anibalzinho "because he recruited Escurinho and Carlitos to murder Cardoso instead of South Africans". (Manuel Fernandes "Escurinho" and Carlitos Rashid have confessed to their part in the assassination.) According to Opa, Satar also claimed that Anibalzinho "paid Escurinho and Carlitos 30 million meticaís (about \$1,260) each, and, via his mother, gave Carlitos 100 million to flee the country, but he came back".

Satar denied there had been any such incident. "I never came to blows with Anibalzinho", he said. "And I never told Opa I was Anibalzinho's boss".

Opa gave evidence before the public part of the trial opened. Much of his testimony, read to the court on Monday, involved crimes other than the Cardoso murder.

Thus he claimed that Satar asked him to murder Antonio Siba-Siba Macuacua, the chairman of the Austral Bank. The plan was to corrupt a policeman named Manhica, to let Opa out of jail specifically to murder Siba-Siba, for which Satar would pay a billion meticaís. This plot fell through when Manhica delayed in responding. (Siba-Siba was murdered, by unknown assailants on 11 August 2001: nobody has been charged with the crime.) Opa also alleged that musician Pedro Langa, murdered on November 2001, was killed on Satar's orders, because he knew too much about the death of Siba-Siba. Opa claimed that, on leaving prison, Satar gave him a hit list of people to be assassinated, including Judge Paulino, and the chief police investigator in the

case, Antonio Frangoulis. He declined to carry out these instructions "because I didn't want to kill anybody".

During his discussions, Opa said, Satar had boasted that the person who really ordered Cardoso's assassination was "o filho do galo" ("the son of the cockerel"), whom he identified as businessman Nyimpine Chissano, oldest son of President Joaquim Chissano.

Opa claimed that a meeting plotting Siba-Siba's death took place in the prison on 2 June 2001, attended by both Satar brothers, and by Ramaya.

But Ramaya protested "In June 2001 I was shut in my cell for 24 hours a day. Three policemen were guarding me. It was impossible to move".

Where is Rohit Kumar?

Maputo, 16 Dec (AIM) - Rohit Kumar, a prosecution witness in the Carlos Cardoso murder trial, was unable to testify on Monday, because he is allegedly somewhere on the Indian sub-continent.

Presiding judge Augusto Paulino said attempts to contact Kumar had failed, and the court believed him to be "in India".

The defence is skeptical, and suspects that Kumar has gone into hiding somewhere in Mozambique.

Prosecuting attorney Mourao Baluce read out the interviews with Kumar held during the preliminary investigations. Kumar said he had come to know Maputo loan shark Momade Assife Abdul Satar ("Nini"), one of those accused of ordering Cardoso's murder, in 1997, when they were both in the top security prison.

Kumar was accused of murdering the owner of a Maputo electrical shop, "Electro-Mundo", and Satar was charged with defrauding the country's largest bank, the BCM, of the equivalent of 144 billion meticaís.

Neither of these cases has ever come to court. Corruption in the Attorney-General's Office led to the release of Satar and the others accused of the BCM fraud, while it is far from clear under what circumstances Kumar left the jail.

Kumar told the police that, some time after they had both left prison, Satar contacted him, and asked him "to find someone to kill Carlos Cardoso". The price Satar put on Cardoso's head was \$50,000.

Kumar turned the request down. He said he would only arrange the murder for \$400,000. So Satar dropped the subject.

When Kumar learned that Cardoso had been killed, he phoned Satar and asked him if he had anything to do with the assassination. He told the police that Satar did not reply.

The defence regard Kumar as a thoroughly unreliable witness.

Domingos Arouca, the lawyer for Satar's brother and co-accused, Ayob Abdul Satar, said that Kumar had lied as to his whereabouts in November 2000, the month of the assassination.

He had told the police that from 17 to 28 November he was in South Africa (Cardoso was murdered on 22 November). But checks with the Mozambican and South African immigration authorities showed that Rohit Kumar had not crossed the border at all in November.

Since he had lied about his whereabouts before, why should the court believe him now?, Arouca asked. He was sure that Kumar had not gone to India.

Nini Satar's lawyer, Eduardo Jorge, asked for permission to show a video tape which, in his view, would prove the unreliability of Kumar as a witness. Paulino rejected the request, on the grounds that the reliability or otherwise of witnesses was a highly subjective matter.

Lawyer demands inquiry

Maputo, 16 Dec (AIM) - One of the defence lawyers in the Carlos Cardoso murder trial on Monday demanded that the court set up an inquiry into how a Sunday paper obtained transcripts of phone calls made by one of the accused, Momade Assife Abdul Satar ("Nini").

Satar's lawyer, Eduardo Jorge, implied that the material concerned had been among the audio and video tapes that the court had inspected, together with the prosecution and defence lawyers, on Friday. Jorge complained that the publication of the transcripts called into question "the good name" of the Abdul Satar family. An inquiry was necessary, he claimed, "to look into the circumstances that made this possible".

The presiding judge, Augusto Paulino, stressed that "the alleged transcripts in the paper did not come from this court. "All of us were working on Friday, and I only left after ensuring that all the tapes were under lock and key in the strongbox of the Supreme Court. You can be sure that, if there was any leak, it was not from the court".

The tapes inspected by the court on Friday were mostly of interviews of the accused carried out by Antonio Frangoulis, the former head of the Maputo branch of the Criminal Investigation Police (PIC). The transcripts published by the Sunday paper "Domingo", however, are of phone calls from Satar to relatives of prosecution witness Osvaldo Muianga ("Dudu").

In these calls Satar is offering bribes to Muianga to change his story. He wanted Muianga to omit all reference to meetings in the Rovuma Hotel at which Satar, his brother Ayob, and former bank manager Vicente Ramaya plotted murder.

Muianga has given various accounts of these meetings: at first he said they discussed plans to kill both Cardoso and lawyer Albano Silva. Then (in January 2002) he retracted the story altogether. Then he retracted the retraction, and, finally, the version he gave in court was that the meetings took place, but only discussed assassinating Albano Silva.

But prior to Muianga's court appearance, on 30 November, Satar made repeated phone calls to his brother, Danilo, and his mother, Fatima Razac. The transcripts in "Domingo" are mostly about money - a thousand dollars here, ten thousand there, and "you must give something to the police". Dollars in cash, dollars in cheques - the total bribe, which Satar says comes from himself and from Ramaya's wife Mariamo, seems to be something in the region of \$20,000.

Repeatedly in these calls the speakers are asked to swear on the Koran that they are telling the truth, and repeatedly Satar warns that Muianga's family should not tape the phone calls.

Something clearly went wrong since the cash ended up in the court's possession, and the transcripts in the hands of "Domingo".

But this was not the only bribe. "Domingo" acquired photocopies of four cheques signed by Satar's sister Rachida, and given to Muianga's mother between February and May 2002. The four cheques amount to 1.68 billion meticaís (about \$70,000). The suspicion must be that this was payment for Muianga's January retraction of his original story.

<http://www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/newsletter/Cardoso14.html>