
Carlos Cardoso murder trial update

6th December

Nini Satar versus Nyimpine Chissano

Maputo, 6 Dec (AIM) - Maputo loan shark Momade Assife Abdul Satar ("Nini") on Friday confronted Nyimpine Chissano, the oldest son of President Joaquim Chissano, across the floor of the Maputo City Court, with completely different versions of their relations.

Cheques signed by Nyimpine Chissano are now at the heart of the trial of Satar, and five others, charged with the November 2000 murder of Mozambique's top investigative journalist, Carlos Cardoso.

Satar claims he lent Chissano 1.2 billion meticaais (about 50,000 US dollars) in late 2000, and the cheques were issued as guarantees. He says he paid the money, at Chissano's request, to Anibal dos Santos Junior ("Anibalzinho"), with no questions asked.

Anibalzinho, currently a fugitive, is the man accused of organising the death squad that murdered Cardoso. Satar claims he only realised the 1.2 billion meticaís was to pay for a contract killing when he met Anibalzinho in prison in 2001.

At the request of Satar's defence lawyer, Eduardo Jorge, Judge Augusto Paulino confronted Satar and Chissano. Both stuck to their stories.

Satar said he had met "on several occasions" with Chissano - "two or three times" at the Unicambios foreign exchange bureau (owned by his brother, and fellow accused, Ayob Abdul Satar), "two or three times" at Chissano's company Expresso tours, and twice at the Polana Hotel.

In addition, the two had met several times at the home of Candida Cossa, a former customs official turned entrepreneur and friend of Chissano. Satar said that Cossa accompanied Chissano on two of his visits to Unicambios.

Chissano retorted "I met with this individual once at Unicambios. None of these other meetings took place" As for business deals between them, Satar claimed he had arranged money transfers for Chissano. He said that in early 2000, at Chissano's request, he sent money to a London account of Teeran Appasamy, a Mauritian businessman, whom Chissano has described as a friend and a business colleague.

Satar also described, but with no details, another, obscure, deal in which a Satar credit was sold on by Chissano to the cooperative bank Credicoop.

Later in 2000 came the 1.2 billion meticais loan, and the cheque guarantees, signed by Chissano, on an Expresso Tours account held in Credicoop.

Again Chissano Jr flatly denied that any of this had ever taken place. "I never had any business dealings with Nini", he said.

As for the cheques - Satar insisted he had collected them in person from Chissano at Expresso tours, and had signed a receipt for them, while Chissano declared "I never gave Nini any cheques anywhere".

At this point the two began insulting each other. Chissano called Satar a liar, while Satar said "he's deceiving the court".

Judge Paulino intervened: "The court will decide who is deceiving or not deceiving", he said. "Your opinion is irrelevant. The court will decide whether it's a lie or the truth".

The court also asked confessed assassin Carlitos Rashid to confirm whether the man in the witness stand was indeed the man he had seen with Anibalzinho on three occasions, before and after the murder, and whom Anibalzinho had told him was Nyimpine Chissano.

Rashid confirmed the identification. "Anibalzinho told me "that's the boss"", he said. "I always had to stay hidden in the car. But I saw him from there" In a torrent of words, before the judge could stop him, Rashid added that he believed that Nyimpine Chissano had put a price on his head and that of a second member of the hit squad, Manuel Fernandes ("Escurinho"). "It's true we were to be eliminated", he exclaimed. "Anibalzinho had 70,000 rands for that".

Chissano simply replied "I don't know this wretched individual".

Throughout the morning session, Chissano insisted that Expresso Tours had issued the postdated cheques to cover a loan from Candida Cossa, not from Satar. But when asked for details about his company's financial arrangements, he either could not remember dates and names, or told the court that it was not really in his hands since "I don't handle the day to day management of Expresso Tours".

It was the general manager, Antonio Malo, and his other staff who did the routine management. He and the two other owners of the company (his brother N'naite Chissano, and close friend Apolinario Pateguana) "were informed of the reasons why the company needed this or that. We needed a loan for the temporary import of vehicles, and on that basis I signed the cheques".

He claimed that, after Cossa told him the cheques were at Unicambios, his brother and Pateguana went round to claim them - but without success.

In April 2001, lawyer Domingos Arouca wrote to Expresso Tours pointing out that the money represented by the cheques should have been delivered months previously (the seven cheques bear dates of between October 2000 and January 2001).

At the trial Arouca represents Ayob Satar, but in April 2001, he had been hired by his brother Nini. Arouca told AIM he had no doubt that the money was owed to Satar, not to Candida Cossa.

Arouca's letter was accompanied by photocopies of six of the cheques, totalling 1.125 billion meticaïs. He demanded that the money be paid in his office within five days.

Expresso Tours did not reply, and Arouca prepared to take the matter to court. But he said that Satar (who was already in prison) told him not to pursue the matter further.

Nyimpine Chissano accused of lying

Maputo, 6 Dec (AIM) - A Maputo weekly paper on Friday accused businessman Nyimpine Chissano, oldest son of President Joaquim Chissano, of lying to the Maputo City court.

Called as a witness in the Carlos Cardoso murder trial, Chissano had said on Thursday that he had never worked for the privatised Austral Bank. He claimed that he simply been a client, with an account at the bank.

On Friday, cross examined by defence lawyer Eduardo Jorge, he repeated this claim.

But the Friday issue of the independent weekly "Savana" described this as "a blatant lie". Repeating a story it had first published on 5 August, and which has never been denied, "Savana" said that between 1997 and 2001 Nyimpine Chissano had been hired as "a consultant on economic matters", advising the Malaysian executive manager of the bank, Koonjambu Muganthan. His salary for this post was 3,000 US dollars a month. In 1997, Chissano Jr was just 27 years old.

Austral collapsed under a mountain of bed debt in early 2001. The Malaysian-Mozambican consortium, headed by former industry minister Octavio Muthemba, which owned 60 per cent of Austral,

refused to recapitalise the bank, and simply handed their shares back to the state.

The Bank of Mozambique stepped in, appointing a provisional board of directors under the chairmanship of Antonio Siba-Siba Macuacua, the head of the central bank's banking supervision department. He then started reviewing all the contracts signed under the previous management.

According to "Savana", Nyimpine Chissano's contract was among those cancelled by Siba-Siba. Chissano was told that his services were no longer required: he was paid no compensation, Siba-Siba told him that any money owing would be discounted against his debts to the bank.

According to the survey carried out by the auditing firm KPMG for Muganthen in September 2000, Nyimpine Chissano had taken out two loans from Austral. Payments were up to date on one, a housing loan for 4.9 billion meticaís (about 206,000 US dollars). But KPMG described a second loan, for 297 million meticaís, as "non-performing".

Chissano's Thursday testimony was also inaccurate as to his whereabouts on 22 November 2000, the day Carlos Cardoso was murdered. He told the court he had been at the birthday party of his friend Araujo Martins. But "Savana" discovered that Martins' birthday falls on 2 March, not 22 November.

So in court on Friday, Chissano Jr changed his testimony. "I was wrong, it wasn't a birthday. We were just talking", he said. He claimed he arrived at Martins' house "after 18.00", but could not remember where he had been before. (Carlos Cardoso was murdered at about 18.40.)

Pateguana supports Nyimpine Chissano

Maputo, 6 Dec (AIM) - Apolinario Pateguana ("Nanaio"), a business partner of Nyimpine Chissano, oldest son of President Joaquim Chissano, on Friday backed up Chissano's story that cheques currently in the possession of the Maputo City Court had nothing to do with the murder of journalist Carlos Cardoso in November 2000.

The cheques have been presented as evidence by Momade Assife Abdul Satar ("Nini"), one of those accused of murdering Cardoso.

Satar claims Nyimpine Chissano issued the cheques (for 1.29 billion meticaís - over 50,000 dollars) as guarantees to cover a loan. He says that, at Chissano's request, he gave the money to Anibal dos Santos Junior ("Anibalzinho"), the fugitive accused of organising the death squad that murdered Cardoso. When Satar met Anibalzinho in prison, he became convinced that the money had paid for the murder. Chissano's story is that the cheques were issued to cover a loan, not from Satar, but from businesswoman Candida Cossa. For reasons that Chissano claimed not to know, Cossa then "negotiated" the cheques with Unicambios, the foreign exchange bureau owned by Satar's brother and co-accused, Ayob Abdul Satar.

Pateguana, son of the former governor of Inhambane province, Francisco Pateguana, is one of the owners of the travel agency and car hire firm Expresso Tours, alongside Nyimpine Chissano and his brother N'naite.

He told the court that he, Nyimpine and N'naite first met Nini Satar when they went to Unicambios "to help Candida Cossa solve a problem she had with Nini". He dated this meeting to May 1999.

Cossa was in debt to Satar (who is a notorious loan shark) "and she wanted us to persuade Nini to give her more time to pay". Pateguana said they were "temporarily successful" in this.

They told Satar that they were buying a licence from Cossa for the marketing of "brands of alcoholic drinks", so she would soon be able to pay him. He said this deal was concluded in July 1999, when he and the Chissano brothers bought the licence from Cossa for 205,000 US dollars.

(The dates given conflict with Nyimpine's evidence: he claimed that he first met Cossa in late 1999, which would push the meeting at Unicambios into 2000).

Pateguana said that he went to Unicambios again in June or July 2000 to demand that the Satars return the cheques which had improperly fallen into their hands.

Nini Satar promptly denied this version. He told the court that Pateguana could not have demanded the cheques back in June or July, since they were postdated, with dates of between October 2000 and January 2001.

He claimed that in August 2000 Pateguana, Nyimpine Chissano and Antonio Malo, the Espresso Tours executive manager, visited him to ask him not to deposit the cheques in any banks. At that time, there was no question of redeeming the cheques, he said.

Pateguana also denied meeting any of the accused in Candida Cossa's house. Earlier in the trial, claims were made that conspiratorial meetings were held in Cossa's house, attended by

Cossa, Nyimpine, Pateguana, Nini Satar and Anibalzinho, discussing plans to murder the then head of the government's Customs Restructuring Unit, Pedro Bule, and Carlos Cardoso.

Pateguana said he had attended a series of "social gatherings" in Cossa's house, and he had never seen any of the accused there.

The businesses of Candida Cossa

Maputo, 6 Dec (AIM) - At the age of 26 Maria Candida Cossa was a simple customs officer: today, at the age of 36, this attractive, smartly dressed woman talks of sums such as 800,000 rands or 450,000 dollars, as if they were amounts that anyone might have in their pocket.

Testifying on Friday in the trial of the six men accused of murdering Mozambique's best known journalist, Carlos Cardoso, Cossa described herself as an entrepreneur, but made no attempt to explain where her wealth came from.

After leaving the customs service ten years ago, in quick succession she ran a poultry farm, a supermarket, a boutique, represented brands of whisky, and owned a bakery. She also became a close friend of Nyimpine Chissano, the oldest son of President Joaquim Chissano, and it is in this capacity that her name has been repeatedly mentioned in the trial.

She has become Nyimpine Chissano's alibi. Chissano claims that the cheques for 1.29 billion meticaís (over 50,000 US dollars) that he signed, and which fell into the hands of Momade Assife Abdul

Satar, one of those accused of ordering Cardoso's murder, were intended to guarantee a loan from Cossa.

On Thursday, Chissano said his company Expresso Tours needed a short term loan to cover unexplained demands from suppliers. So he turned, not to any bank, but to Cossa for the money, and the company gave her a series of post-dated cheques as guarantees.

Cossa's story from the witness stand was very different. The first deals she did with Nyimpine Chissano, his brother N'naite, and their friend Apolinario Pateguana, concerned luxury cars.

They asked her how she had obtained her cars, and if she could help them buy luxury vehicles. "I facilitated the purchases of three Mercedes, two S-class models and one E-class", she said.

The total cost was over 800,000 rands (80,000 dollars at today's exchange rate). "I didn't import the vehicles", said Cossa. "I presented them (the Chissano brothers and Pateguana) at the place where I had brought the cars. We then took the cars to Maputo".

Payment was by instalments: a down-payment of 260,000 rands was made "and I then collected money from them to send to the Standard Bank". Cossa added that not all of this debt had been paid off.

As for the loan she had made to Nyimpine, Cossa said she had done this because he was about to be hauled before a South African court. She said they had both been on a trip to Johannesburg, when they were told that the following day Nyimpine would have to appear in a Pretoria court "because of a problem with cars".

In short, the "Budget Rent-a-Car" company was suing Chissano's company Expresso tours over unpaid bills. Cossa said that

Nyimpine's concern was to keep his name out of the South African press: to do this he needed, very urgently, to find some money to pay Budget Rent-a-Car, and that company was demanding an immediate payment of 250,000 rands.

Cossa said she contacted a friend in South Africa (whom she declined to name) who agreed to put up the 250,000 rands, against Cossa's own vehicle as guarantee. Once they were back in Maputo, Cossa lent a further 30,000 dollars, in cash, to Expresso Tours to clear the debt to Budget Rent-a-Car.

Cossa confirmed that, at the request of one of the accused, former bank manager Vicente Ramaya, she lent Zulfikar Sulemane, a businessman in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, 450,000 dollars. She made cheques to this amount out to Ramaya - but the money has still not been repaid.

She said that Ramaya had gone to the Cabo Delgado provincial capital, Pemba, to persuade Sulemane to repay, but without success. She went there herself, and Sulemane signed a document admitting that he owed her the money.

She said she also did business with the consultancy office Ramaya was operating from his house. He helped her out on a project to "represent" Nestle branded produce.

"I frequented his office, he gave me invoices and I paid in cash for the Nestle products", she said. The total amount involved was 3.5 million rands (350,000 dollars), she said.

Despite her willingness to lend money to Sulemane/Ramaya, and to Expresso Tours, Cossa herself ran up a debt with Momade Satar.

She said that unspecified building work ground to a halt "because the bank cut the funding" (not altogether surprising - by mid-2000,

Cossa had outstanding loans of almost three billion meticaais to the Austral Bank, which were not being repaid).

So she borrowed money from a man named Gulamo Shabir, who took a post-dated cheque as a guarantee. He "negotiated the cheque with Unicambios" (the foreign exchange bureau owned by Satar's brother and co-accused, Ayob Abdul Satar).

When the cheque fell due, Unicambios came to collect the money - by then she owed 130,000 dollars. Momade Satar "sent two people round", she said. "They were demanding the money and threatening me".

No doubt we will discover how she circumvented the Unicambios enforcers on Monday, when she continues giving her evidence.

Intimidation "must not prevail"

Maputo, 6 Dec (AIM) - Attempts to intimidate officials linked to the administration of justice "must not prevail", Augusto Paulino, the presiding judge in the Carlos Cardoso murder trial, told the Maputo city court on Friday.

He was referring to a burglary on Thursday at the home of Mourao Baluce, the attorney prosecuting the six men accused of murdering Mozambique's top investigative journalist in November 2000. It is feared that the burglary was a warning sent to Baluce by those who want to abort this case.

According to the Attorney-General, Joaquim Madeira, an unknown individual visited Baluce's home on Tuesday. He told Baluce's

wife that he had come from the Attorney-General's Office, to undertake work on the house.

Taken in, Baluce's wife allowed him to visit various rooms in the house. The man left, promising to return with a budget for the building work necessary.

But there was no such mission from the Attorney-General's Office, and Madeira presumed the man was simply reconnoitring the house in preparation for the burglary.

The house was broken into on Thursday morning, while Baluce's wife was out shopping. Madeira did not reveal what had been stolen.

He said it was important to inform the public "so that they know we are the target of threats".

"The Public Prosecutor's Office is not going to drop this case", said Madeira, "but we want our security guaranteed".

It is nothing short of astonishing that there is no effective guard on the home of the man prosecuting the most high profile criminal case in Mozambique's history.

At the start of the Friday court sessions, Paulino added his voice to the demands for proper protection. "We must be able to live without fear, and work without fear", he insisted.

Judge refutes critics

Maputo, 6 Dec (AIM) - Judge Augusto Paulino on Friday rejected criticism for those who believe the Maputo City court is calling "too many witnesses" in the Carlos Cardoso murder trial.

In remarks at the close of the day's session, Paulino revealed that the court is under attack in some quarters for calling to the witness stand people who were not heard at earlier stages of the proceedings.

This can only refer to the decision to sub-poena Nyimpine Chissano, the oldest son of president Joaquim Chissano, his friends and associates Apolinario Pateguana and Candida Cossa, and former industry minister Octavio Muthemba.

"Some people think this court has lost its sense of direction", said Paulino. "No we haven't ! Every exercise we are undertaking here is a line in our final ruling".

"All that we are doing is in accordance with the law, and in order to discover the truth", he insisted. "We are on the path towards clarifying the entire situation".

The main job of the court was not to sentence people, but to clarify the truth. "The sentence then arises as a consequence of the clarification", he said.

"From contradiction to contradiction, we clear up the case", declared Paulino.

<http://www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/newsletter/Cardoso9.html>