

Mozambique

Mozambican President's son "innocent" in Cardoso murder

afrol News, 6 February - The man convicted of being the leading figure behind the murder of Mozambique's prominent journalist Carlos Cardoso now declares that it had not been the President's son that had ordered the assassination. He had been on the payroll of those businessmen accused of corruption by Mr Cardoso.

Anibal dos Santos Junior ("Anibalzinho") last week was convicted for playing the lead role in the murder of journalist and editor Cardoso in November 2000. Anibalzinho and several of his five convicted comrades earlier had connected the Mozambican President's eldest son, Nyimpine Chissano, to the Cardoso murder.

Today, local radio in the Mozambican capital, Maputo, informs that Anibalzinho withdraws these accusations against Chissano junior. "Nyimpine Chissano is not involved in the death of Mr Cardoso," the convicted killer declares, "he is not guilty."

Nyimpine Chissano is a wealthy businessman with an ambiguous reputation in Mozambique. The fax journal 'Metical', once owned by Mr Cardoso, some time ago disclosed that the President's son was detained with cocaine by South African police. The "disclosure" turned out to be difficult to verify and lead to a defamation case won by Mr Chissano. Compensations turned out that high that Mrs Nina Berg - Mr Cardoso's Norwegian widow and Metical's business manager on behalf of the couple's minor children - had to close down the journal.

Anibalzinho, clearing Mr Chissano junior, on the other hand now claims that "the persons planning, ordering and paying the execution of the assassination are the brothers Satar and Vicente Ramaya," both prominent businessmen within the banking and finance sectors of Maputo. The two are currently in jail, following convictions that were made possible by a corruption affair disclosed by Mr Cardoso.

According to South African journalist Phillip van Niekerk, covering the trial against Mr Cardoso's killers on behalf of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the accusations against Nyimpine Chissano however are likely to be investigated by the Mozambican prosecuting attorney.

Judge Augusto Paulino, who made the verdict in the trial against Anibalzinho and his five colleagues last week, has vowed to push for a thorough investigation of the alleged connection between the President's son and the Cardoso murder.

- There are sufficient indications to launch an investigation against Nyimpine and we are sure there are influential persons involved in the case, said Mr van Niekerk on behalf of CPJ. The group has asked for a thorough investigation of the accusations. CPJ however also was mostly impressed by the handling of a sentence in the case, given that, "in 94 per cent of cases of journalists murdered in the exercise of their profession [worldwide], nobody is ever charged with the crime, let alone sentenced."

The six killers were on 31 January sentenced to terms of 23 to 28 years of prison, in addition to paying a compensation of 14 billion meticaïs (US\$ 588,000) to Mr Cardoso's two children. Anibalzinho however already has pleaded for a new trial against him as he had been tried in absentia. The head of the killer group last week was captured in South Africa after escaping

Maputo's most secure prison last year - allegedly with assistance "from the highest circles". He has now been extradited to Mozambique.

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