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## Steenhuisen report linked to George's resignation

*Internal conflicts escalate as party faces leadership challenges*

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THE resignation of the DA Federal Finance Chairperson, Dr Dion George, could be related to the party's Federal Legal Commission (FLC) report, which cleared its leader, John Steenhuisen, of allegations of misappropriating funds through the party-issued credit card.

This is according to a source, who labelled the finding as "an attempt" to handle the damage done to the party by Steenhuisen. George announced his resignation from the DA and as a member of Parliament yesterday, citing the "intolerable" situation following months of internal party conflict.

His resignation means the end of nearly three decades as a DA member.

George joined the DA in 1995, and in 2005, he was elected the party's chairman of the Sandown branch in the suburb of Sandton, Johannesburg. The resignation comes as the DA prepares for its Federal Congress in April 2026, where leadership positions will be contested.

This follows a public feud between him and Steenhuisen.

In November 2025, Steenhuisen requested that President Cyril Ramaphosa remove George from his post as Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE), citing poor performance.

Tensions became public when news emerged that George had blocked Steenhuisen's party credit card.

He alleged that Steenhuisen misused the credit card for personal expenses, including family household expenses and food orders via Uber Eats.

George claimed he blocked and removed the card in March 2020 because the expenses could not be reconciled.

Steenhuisen denied misconduct allegations, asserting that he voluntarily returned the card because its administration was "onerous" and moved to a reimbursement system. He characterised George's allegations as a "revenge attempt" following his removal from the Cabinet.

On Monday, the FLC released a preliminary report clearing Steenhuisen of misappropriation. The commission found that expenses were "fully reconciled" and personal costs were reimbursed.

The source, who has spoken anonymously, claims these findings could be one of the reasons behind George's resignation.

"Clearly, he is not happy with Steenhuisen and the fact that he is cleared of the charge related to the party's credit card. He had to go," said the source, adding that even though Steenhuisen

would be out, the party is protecting its reputation.

In his letter, George admitted that the report is one of the reasons behind his resignation.

He said the report was the final straw for him, adding that it is a reflection of what the party has become under failed leadership.

George also added that the DA, under Steenhuisen, has been captured by the ANC and other interests. He said this resulted in the DA being completely muzzled and losing its voice and ability to lead in South Africa's interest.

George recently lodged a formal complaint with the Public Protector, where he accused Steenhuisen of actions "tantamount to cadre deployment" and orchestrating a "purge" of independent voices within the party.

He alleged that he was fired as minister for refusing to favour the captive lion breeding and hunting industry, which he claims is of interest to the current DFFE Minister, Willie Aucamp, and his family.

He stated that Steenhuisen uses his muscle as a leader of the DA, GNU participant, and chief negotiator, as well as his position as Minister of Agriculture, to remove officials who are acting independently and impartially, and replace them with specific candidates who suit his personal political objectives.

He added that Steenhuisen's interference in ministerial roles and the replacement of experienced officials with "loyalists" mirrors the ANC's cadre deployment policy, which the DA has historically campaigned against.

The DA's Federal Council Chairperson, Helen Zille, stated that it was "unfortunate" that George resigned before the internal disciplinary processes could conclude.

She said the allegations included irregular staff appointments to his ministerial office and inflated salaries at public expense.

He also faced accusations that staff in his ministry sought departmental information to pursue internal party political matters, bringing the party into disrepute through the media.

"It would have been preferable for Dr George to go through the FLC process to test the veracity of these allegations," said Zille, adding that the process will proceed as determined by the party's Federal Executive on Monday.

Meanwhile, political analyst Zakhele Ndlovu said there is more to this saga than meets the eye, adding that it could pose a serious problem, not just for the DA but also for Steenhuisen, as the party prepares to hold its elective conference.



LEANO Mkhize, 11, was delighted when she stumbled on her favourite game, hopscotch drawn on the walkway along Florida Road in Durban yesterday. | TUMI PAKKIES Independent Newspapers

INQUIRY

## Khumalo details reform challenges amid resistance at Crime Intelligence

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THE head of Crime Intelligence, Dumisani Khumalo, yesterday said he found the division still characterised by misuse of Crime Intelligence methodologies and resources when he was appointed to the position in 2022. Khumalo said there were complaints from the operational environment of SAPS that they were not getting the expected services.

"These are also related to findings of lots of commissions and inquiries that were established focusing on some of the issues (including) crime intelligence problems," he said. Khumalo made the statement when he was giving evidence before the parliamentary inquiry that is probing allegations that were made by KwaZulu-Natal police commissioner Lieutenant-General Nhlahlhla Mkhwanazi at a press conference in July 2025.

The inquiry investigates the alleged unlawful disbandment of the Political Killings Task Team (PKTT), the moratorium on the filling of vacancies in the Crime Intelligence Unit, and the alleged corrupt

relationship between senior leadership of SAPS and members of the public, as well as political interference in the work of the police service. In his evidence, Khumalo also said he found outdated and non-existing legal policies and legal environments.

"The environment was serving on a free mode. It was like Crime Intelligence was serving its own purpose."

He also said there was misuse of state vehicles by senior management of the division, including senior management of SAPS.

"Those vehicles were allocated to those seniors unlawfully because it amounted to fraud and corruption," said the crime intelligence boss.

According to Khumalo, there was also a problem of physical, human and financial control measures.

"It was a free-for-all," he said, adding that there was a problem of appointment of relatives and friends of the management.

Khumalo, who is also project leader for PKTT, told the inquiry that he had taken decisions that made him unpopular at senior management level, resulting in misinformation about the reforms he

introduced.

"There were serious legal reforms that one had to implement starting with compliance with Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication Related Information Act," he said. "There were lots of interception activities outside the legal framework. One had to prioritise that to acquire an exemption certificate that allows one to purchase, keep and utilise the listed equipment."

"The other that had to be prioritised was exemption by the National Treasury to depart from procurement processes for covert operations supported through the Secret Service Account."

Khumalo said when he took over the division, he also had to identify and recruit capable officers through transfers and promotions to implement the legal framework that had been passed.

There was also the removal of vehicles from senior management, redistributed for real purposes at operational level.

"Soon after that directive was issued under my signature, vehicles had to be collected, inspected and redistribution started."

TENSIONS

## Security heightened for MEC Shinga as NFP feud escalates

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SECURITY around KwaZulu-Natal Social Development MEC Mbalu Shinga has been heightened amid concerns for her safety.

Sources in the National Freedom Party have revealed that security has been increased around Shinga following what they termed "concerns," saying it was clear there are some people who want her position by hook or by crook.

Shinga has been thrust into the spotlight after she refused to vote for a motion of no confidence brought by the Umkhonto weSizwe Party against KZN Premier Thami Ntuli. The NFP is a key member of the GPU, which also includes the IFP, ANC, and the DA.

These developments have laid bare the tensions in the party. A video circulating online shows party president Ivan Barnes involved in a scuffle with another leader this week. The Mercury understands that the other leader is part of a faction opposed to Barnes and took exception to how he was addressed by Barnes, leading to the scuffle.

The heightened security around Shinga comes as the Inkatha Freedom Party has also revealed that there have been death threats directed at the premier. The IFP in the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature said it condemns in the strongest possible terms the vile and dangerous death threats directed at Premier Ntuli, which are circulating openly on social media. A source in the NFP said Shinga is facing a difficult time as there are people seeking to take her position. "The security around her has been beefed up; she now has 24-hour security, which is not nice. It was after there were concerns around her safety."

The source spoke openly about tensions in the party. "You saw the fight between leaders; we really do not want the current president, Ivan Barnes. He does not respect the party members; he takes decisions on his own and demands that the rest of us comply. Even the attempt to remove Shinga is for his personal benefit; he does not have the power to remove the provincial chairperson. I can tell you now that Shinga is not going anywhere, and the GPU will continue to stand."

One of her colleagues stated, "You can't speak on matters of security in public because revealing the details just compromises her security. This is something that is being taken very seriously amid all these tensions, as she is seen as someone on the rise."

"We cannot run away from the fact that there are people eyeing her position; they see themselves occupying that position and, to be quite frank, they are intent on taking over; they want her position by hook or by crook," said the NFP insider.

"We can't discuss her security in public because if you say it has been strengthened, that means these forces will now double their efforts, whereas if you reveal any details, the enemy will know and adjust accordingly."

The source said Shinga was standing true to the party's decision to join the GPU. "Joining the GPU was a decision taken by the party; it cannot be that now that someone is angry over something they have not gotten, we suddenly want to abandon the GPU. We joined the GPU because we understood the importance of a stable government."

The official said the tension in the party will pass. "We have been through worse. We lost the founding president; that was one of the most difficult times for the party. There were times when we did not contest the elections, and everybody thought that the party was dead, but we came back; we will overcome this situation too."

He said they are, however, concerned about the impact that the internal battles are having on the party. The premier's office declined to comment and directed questions to Shinga's office. Barnes had not responded to a request for comment.

EXPLOITATION

## Corruption in farm equity schemes leaves African workers destitute

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THE farm equity schemes programme, intended to improve the lives of farm workers, has been labelled as a corrupt "slush fund" that has compromised the workers and left many destitute.

The Umkhonto we Sizwe Party (MKP) claims that the long-established programme has become a slush fund looted by commercial farmers. The commercial agriculture sector has also claimed that the scheme has delivered far less than expected and is plagued by allegations of wrongdoing.

Equity schemes were meant to shift ownership patterns and embed transformation in commercial agriculture. The Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy reports that over 70% of farmland is still owned by white individuals, while black ownership is below 10%.

Recently, Land Reform and Rural Development Minister Mzwanele Nkhosho disclosed that forensic audits into farm equity schemes are underway, with the department pursuing fund recovery and considering further investigations into corruption.

Farm equity schemes were introduced to broaden ownership in commercial agriculture by allocating shares to farm workers, often through trusts or joint ventures. The intention was to deliver dividends, representation, and eventual tenure security. However, allegations have surfaced that many schemes collapsed under weak governance.

Workers were excluded from management decisions, dividends were withheld, and equity was diluted or sold off under questionable circumstances. These failures undermine constitutional obligations under Section 25 of the Constitution to ensure equitable access to land

and Section 23 to protect labour rights.

A report documented how farmworkers in the Northern Cape were misled into selling their shares for as little as R20 000 each, losing multimillion-rand stakes in 22 commercial farms. It was also reported that in one project, the Ministry of Land Affairs and Rural Development is trying to recover close to R60 million after the project failed to deliver.

Andile Mngxitama of the MKP stated, "We are calling for a forensic audit into the farm equity scheme; these have become a slush fund for white farmers and have left the workers much worse off."

"We estimate that about R700 million of government money has been poured into this with no benefit for the farm workers. To date, we do not know of any farm workers that are doing well after this programme; if they are, they must be very few."

Mngxitama further explained that

under these programmes, the government paid money to buy a stake in the operations of the farm on behalf of the farm workers. However, it has become apparent that the workers are not benefiting; instead, some are losing not just their land but also their homes as a result of this programme, which was designed to benefit them.

"We are calling for a forensic investigation to be conducted on the programme and for the commercial white farmers that have illegally benefited from the programme to be prosecuted. We also suspect that the Department of Land Affairs staff is facilitating this corruption, and we are also calling on them to be prosecuted."

Johann Kotze of Agrisa commented that farm schemes are supposed to set people up for success; some work, while others have failed dismally. "There is a lot of failure in that space; we need to have

retrospection to see how it worked and how it did not. It is not good enough, and there is a great threat to agriculture."

He mentioned concerns about fronting, incidents of paying dividends, and tricking workers into selling their stakes.

"There is some truth to that; hence the minister has decided to conduct an investigation to find out what exactly is going on. The second part is to determine who is involved in this; are they farmers or officials? Will they continue when it is tough?"

When contacted, the department referred *The Mercury* to a previous report where the ministry had committed to recovering the funds and stated that investigations into equity schemes would be considered to determine whether corruption occurred and to provide remedial action. The minister added that justice for farm workers would be pursued where wrongdoing is found.



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A MAN SHOULD ALWAYS CONSIDER HOW MUCH HE HAS MORE THAN HE WANTS.  
| JOSEPH ADDISON