
**AFFIDAVIT OF ADRIAAN JURGENS BASSON
BEFORE THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO STATE CAPTURE**

1. I, Adriaan Jurgens Basson, state the following under oath in English:
2. I am an adult male employed as the editor-in-chief of News24, a digital publication owned and published by Media24 (Pty), having its registered address at 40 Heerengracht Avenue, Cape Town.
3. The following facts are within my personal knowledge and are, to the best of my belief, both true and correct.
4. I started my career in journalism in 2003 as a crime reporter at *Beeld* newspaper in Johannesburg. I have since occupied a number of positions within the journalism profession, including assistant editor of *City Press*, editor-in-chief of *Beeld* newspaper and editor-in-chief of *Netwerk24*.
5. I depose to this affidavit solely to provide evidence in respect of personal threats and intimidation I suffered while reporting on allegations of corruption at the Bosasa group of companies.


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6. In 2006, while I was employed as a reporter at *Beeld* newspaper, my colleague Carien du Plessis and I published a series of articles concerning the Bosasa group of companies and what we believed to be their corrupt relationship with the department of correctional services, from which the group received government tenders worth billions of rands.
7. Between mid-2007 and September 2010, I was employed as an investigative journalist by the *Mail&Guardian* newspaper. The investigative unit later became known as *amaBhungane*, or the *M&G Centre for Investigative Journalism*. I continued my investigation into Bosasa whilst being employed by the *Mail&Guardian*.
8. During the period that I was employed at the *Mail&Guardian*, I was threatened and intimidated by Bosasa. In my opinion, the sole purpose of these threats was to intimidate and scare me to a point where I would stop reporting on Bosasa.
9. For purposes of this affidavit, I will refer to two groups or episodes of threats I received whilst I was employed by the *Mail&Guardian*.
10. The first group of threats involve a series of calls I received from people who identified themselves as Bosasa employees and told me in a threatening way to stop reporting on Bosasa. I don't remember the exact dates of these calls but clearly recall that these calls were made during the time I was employed by the *Mail&Guardian* and were related to my reportage on Bosasa.

11. In January 2009, I published a series of articles in the *Mail&Guardian* based on leaked emails that exposed how Bosasa employees had written large sections of tender documents for contracts that were awarded to Bosasa companies. This was particularly damning evidence and I recall that the threats occurred after the publication of this information.
12. I received the threatening phone calls from a range of telephone numbers, including cell phone numbers, landlines and unknown numbers. The calls were made during all hours of the day, including late at night. The callers, who identified themselves as Bosasa employees, warned me to stop publishing stories that negatively reflected on the group.
13. I recall that some of these callers used profanities during the calls. Some told me that I would be responsible for them losing their jobs and that their families would be without income because of me. Some of the callers also accused me of being motivated by racism in my writings about Bosasa.
14. I was disturbed by these calls and tried to explain to the callers why I was doing my job. I also attempted to inform them about the information my colleagues and I had uncovered about their employer. It was apparent to me that the calls appeared to be part of an orchestrated campaign.
15. By that time, I had cultivated several sources inside the Bosasa group. I was told by my sources that my cell phone number was distributed to Bosasa



employees with a warning that I would be responsible for job losses in the group. I was specifically told that a certain senior director of the company played a central role in distributing my contact details to staff.

16. I saved most of the identifiable numbers of threatening callers on my phone and ignored or blocked them when they called again. After a period, the calls ended.
17. The second episode during which I was threatened and intimidated took place in February 2009. I received a phone call from a woman who said she was a media colleague and wanted to "warn" me about the dangers of reporting on Bosasa.
18. I clearly remember that I was on holiday and driving back to our accommodation at night when the call came through. The number of the caller was visible on my cell phone.
19. The woman proceeded to read a list of my personal information from what sounded to be an intelligence report. She said she wanted to "be sure" she was talking to the right person and that Bosasa had commissioned a private investigator to compile a report on me. The information she read out included the addresses of homes I had lived in; my ID number; my place of birth; the names of family members and friends, and their professions, and details of my academic studies.



20. She told me that I was "very brave for a young man" and threatened to "kill" me if I told anyone about our conversation.
21. The woman offered to meet me to discuss the "bigger" issues behind the Bosasa story. I said I would call her when I returned to Johannesburg.
22. A basic Google search of her cellphone number revealed that the number belonged to Benedicta Dube, a journalist and public relations practitioner. Dube previously worked for the *Financial Mail*, *Classic FM* and *e.tv*, but was working at a PR firm called Igagu Media at the time of the call.
23. I had no doubt in my mind that Dube tried to intimidate and threaten me by informing me that she and Bosasa had my personal information – including information about my friends and family – in their possession. I doubt Dube ever had any intention of informing me of "bigger" issues behind Bosasa, as she had claimed during her phone call. My suspicion was confirmed a few months later when a company source told me she was on Bosasa's payroll and had been briefed about me by Bosasa's directors, in an attempt to discredit me and the *Mail&Guardian*.
24. I disclosed the intimidation by Dube in a column published in the *Mail&Guardian* of 22 May 2009 titled 'Very brave for a young man'.
25. Subsequent to Dube's call, the *Mail&Guardian's* legal representative wrote to Bosasa and Igagu Media, demanding the return of the personal information in

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the possession of the two companies. Bosasa's attorney denied the company had acted in an "unlawful manner as alleged or at all" and said Dube's information "falls within the public domain". Igagu Media did not respond and Dube claimed she did not recall our conversation. She accused me of "blackmail journalism".



DEPONENT

The deponent has acknowledged that he knows and understands the contents of this affidavit which was signed and sworn to or solemnly affirmed before me at SEA POINT SAPS on this the 28 day of JANUARY 2019, the regulations in Government Notice no. R1258 of 21 July 1972, as amended and Government Notice no. R1648 of 19 August 1977, as amended, having been complied with.

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NEWS

'Very brave for a young man'

Adriaan Basson 22 May 2009 08:37

On a Sunday evening in February I was phoned by a woman with a raspy voice who told me she knew where I lived.

The woman, later identified as communication strategist Benedicta Dube, also knew where and what I had studied, where I was born, what my ID number was and she read to me the names of some of my friends and their professions.

During our conversation of almost 18 minutes Dube also threw in lines such as: ‘You are very brave for a young man’ and said she would ‘kill’ me if I told anyone about our conversation.

Her call came after I exposed in the *Mail & Guardian* over a period of three weeks the corrupt relationship between facilities management company Bosasa and the Department of Correctional Services.

Dube posed as sympathetic—she warned me Bosasa had commissioned a private investigator to do a report on me and offered to meet me to discuss the ‘bigger’ issues behind the story.

I was sceptical—she spent most of our conversation talking about my personal details ‘because I want to be sure I’m talking to the right person’. My suspicions were confirmed by an inside source, who told me Dube had been briefed on me by Bosasa executives since at least August 2008 (I’ve been investigating the company since early 2006). A strategy to discredit the *M&G* and me was discussed.

My attempts to secure a meeting with her have proved futile.



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I am convinced her motives were never to caution, but rather to intimidate. The *M&G*'s lawyer wrote to Bosasa and Igagu Media (where Dube is 'group executive: media and publishing') on May 6, demanding an immediate return of all my personal information in their possession.

Bosasa's lawyer denied the company had acted in an 'unlawful manner as alleged or at all' and said Dube's information 'falls within the public domain'. Igagu Media did not respond. Dube claims she doesn't recall our conversation and that she doesn't work for Igagu anymore. She accused the *M&G* of 'blackmail journalism'.



Adriaan Basson

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spying

