

Submissions for Cele's hearing raise queries

A hearing into alleged misconduct by suspended police commissioner Bheki Cele over controversial police building leases is set to begin next week, amid questions on why members of the public had been invited to make submissions.

Cele was suspended by President Jacob Zuma in October after a probe by Public Protector Thuli Madonsela found that his actions in the procurement of two police buildings for R1,6bn were unlawful and amounted to maladministration.

On Friday, the public were invited to make submissions to the board of inquiry.

Board spokeswoman Bongiwe Gambu said none had been received so far.

Gambu said Cele had a right to legal representation and a right to testify at the hearing, but it was unclear whether he would.

Madonsela would, however, make submissions to the inquiry.

Democratic Alliance police spokeswoman Dianne Kohler Barnard said her presentation would include Cele's apparent lack of understanding of the Public Finance Management Act, the increase in deaths at the hands of the police during his tenure, and the militarisation of the police.

Gareth Newham, head of the Institute for Security Studies' crime and justice programme, said it was "peculiar" that the public at large were invited to make submissions to the inquiry.

Newham said it made no sense to hold so broad an inquiry, as a whole range of issues could come up with public submissions.

The board of inquiry hearings start on March 1 in Pretoria.

The inquiry is headed by Judge Jake Molo. Judge Molo will be assisted by advocates Terry Motau and Anthea Platt.

No deadlines have been set for the board to conclude its work. Cele was suspended on full pay.

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