

Higher education minister Blade Nzimande denies allegations of kickbacks

 By Imran Salie

9 Jan 2024

Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande [has denied allegations](#) made against him by the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA) at a media briefing in Pretoria on Monday, 8 January.



Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Professor Blade Nzimande

OUTA called for the minister's resignation on 4 January in a [press announcement](#), saying that it released voice recordings of two meetings between the chairperson of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) board Ernest Khosa and Nzimande that supposedly reveal how service providers allegedly paid millions of rands in kickbacks to them, as well as at least R1m to the South African Communist Party (SACP). "This was done in return for tenders and protection for service providers," OUTA said.

"I wish to dismiss the baseless insinuation by OUTA, some organisations, including some sections of the media, that I as minister was involved in some form of corruption at NSFAS. These are all lies that emanate from a malicious fightback campaign. My conscience is clear, and I have nothing to hide or fear.

"As stated in my statement on 5 January, I reserve my rights to take the necessary legal action and I have voluntarily decided that I am going to subject myself to the relevant legal processes and ethics bodies of the African National Congress (ANC) and the SACP," the minister said.

Nzimande said that the leaked recordings are part of a nefarious fight-back campaign that is meant to undermine and frustrate the decision of the NSFAS board to start with the legal proceedings to terminate the contracts of four direct payment solution service providers.

He said the publishing of the report and leaking of the recordings were calculated to disrupt the start of the academic year and had no regard for the plight and well-being of poor and working-class students.

The recordings

OUTA said the recordings were leaked by a whistleblower and were created after the NSFAS board resolved on 16 August 2023 that the CEO, Andile Nongogo, was to be placed on special leave while a board-ordered investigation into his conduct was being undertaken.

"At the time of the meeting, the board's decision hasn't been made public yet. The investigation followed another OUTA report detailing Nongogo's relationship with the directors of Coinvest, one of the NSFAS direct payment service providers, that could be traced back to Nongogo's tenure as CEO of the Services SETA (SSETA)," OUTA said.

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