

## Lawsuits filed over defamatory tweet

Former President Jacob Zuma's claims that one of his former colleagues was an apartheid spy is to be tested in court. Former Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom is suing Zuma for R500 000. **Business Day** reports that the case is set for 21 August. Hanekom argues that the accusations made on Zuma's official Twitter account had caused 'immense harm and damage' to his reputation and this harm would continue as long as 'this statement remained published without censure'. Hanekom said Zuma's tweet, made just days after the former President appeared at the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture in July and accused other ANC leaders of being spies, clearly insinuated that he was part of a 'plan' hatched by the apartheid government and foreign intelligence agencies to remove Zuma as President. Zuma sparked an outcry by claiming that the ANC's leadership had been infiltrated by spies planted by foreign intelligence agencies. Hanekom wants the court to order Zuma to delete the tweet and then to 'unconditionally withdraw his spy claim, acknowledge that it was entirely false' and apologise. And Reserve Bank Governor Lesetja Kganyago yesterday announced that he is suing outspoken ANC Nelson Mandela Bay councillor Andile Lungisa for R500 000 for defamation after two tweets which characterised Kganyago as a 'lackey of racist people'. Lungisa confirmed to **News24** that he has received the summons and that he will oppose it. On 5 June, Lungisa tweeted: **'He, like many of his ilk, imagines that proximity to the culturally fetid but economically Neo-settlers, coupled with a few lattes makes him an exceptional k\*\*\*\*r'.**

*Meanwhile, Public Protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane will next month square off in court with former Western Cape Premier Helen Zille over her controversial colonialism tweets,* which Mkhwebane insists are 'likely to cause racial tension, divisions and violence in SA'. Zille maintains the comments are protected by her constitutional right to freedom of expression. The **Financial Mail** notes that although Zille is now out of office and the outcome of her court challenge to the tweet report will have no real consequences for her, the case will undoubtedly be important in defining how the right to freedom of expression does or does not protect political leaders in expressing or tweeting politically contentious views. Mkhwebane's views on the freedom of expression argument raised by Zille are firm. **'Leaders in her position should avoid statements that have the effect of dividing society on the basis of their racial experiences,'** she states in court papers. Zille is seeking to review Mkhwebane's findings on the tweets that she intentionally caused harm and offence with her remarks about colonialism and violated both the Constitution and the Executive Members Ethics Act.