

Fraud scandal rocks Mandela's Brazil tour

A FRAUD scandal this week rocked the visit of Mr Nelson Mandela to Brazil.

It involved alleged embezzlers who raised money for a visit to a Brazilian state which was not on the Mandela itinerary.

Trade union leaders in Espirito Santo, which the Mandelas are due to visit today, claim the state government was tricked into donating R129 600 to a fake anti-apartheid group called Amandla, which said it was responsible for "Mandela's visit to Espirito Santo".

Vague

The five men who run "Amandla" — a group unknown to Brazil's major black movements — have been exposed as being the men who were arrested in connection with fraudulently collecting funds and donations for a medical relief fund for Iraq which turned out to be a con.

Authorities in Espirito

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Santo confirmed they had been approached by a group called Amandla in connection with "the visit by Mandela".

State Justice Secretary Renato Soares said he had met two men who sounded "somewhat vague" but claimed to represent 200 organisations throughout Brazil as well as one of the main trade unions and had apparent approval of the ANC executive in South Africa.

Political sources in the state claim money was paid out to the group, although this has been officially denied.

When Mr Mandela's official itinerary was published, Espirito Santo was not mentioned and local authorities were puzzled. It was then that the con-trick was uncovered.

Amandla had claimed in pamphlets it had the support of the ANC's Alfred

Nzo, Walter Sisulu and Joe Slovo. Members of black activist groups, who did not want to be named, claimed in the *Journal do Brasil* that the men said to represent Amandla had been to SA several times.

It was the ANC itself which, on hearing about the sham, decided to suddenly add Espirito Santo to the itinerary, cutting short Mr Mandela's stay in Salvador da Bahia, the "black capital" of Brazil.

Puzzled

This was to "avoid further embarrassment", according to political sources in Espirito Santo's capital, Vitoria.

Espirito Santo is one of Brazil's smallest states and has no direct significance for Mr Mandela apart from having one of the only two black state governors in the country.

Many Brazilians were puzzled by the sudden addition of the state to the Mandela itinerary.

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