

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF FULTON COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA

STATE OF GEORGIA,)	
)	INDICTMENT
v.)	NO. 22SC183572
)	
JEFFERY WILLIAMS,)	
)	
Defendant.)	

**ORDER OF CONTEMPT AND INCARCERATION FOR
BRIAN STEEL**

During the proceedings in the above-styled case on the afternoon of June 10, 2024, one of the two representatives for Defendant Jeffery Williams, Mr. Brian Steel, took to the podium and stated to the Court that he had been informed of an *ex parte* communication which took place in the Court’s chambers that morning. The only parties present for this *ex parte* matter were the Court, the Court’s official court reporter, representatives from the State, the State’s witness Mr. Kenneth Copeland, and counsel for Mr. Copeland. In addition to the Court’s serious concern with how this information was improperly disclosed to Defense counsel, Mr. Steel made several claims regarding the sum and substance of the communication that the Court found troubling. The Court having told Mr. Steel multiple times that he needs to tell the Court how he came into that information, and the Court having explicitly warned Mr. Steel that he faces contempt of court should he not comply, the Court finds Mr. Steel has repeatedly refused to follow the Court’s order.

“Every court has the power to compel obedience to its orders and to control the conduct of persons connected with a judicial proceeding. *See* O.C.G.A. § 15-1-3 (3), (4). One who disobeys an order or command of the court may be found in criminal contempt.” In re Syvertson, 368 Ga. App. 865, 866, 891 S.E.2d 424, 425 (2023). “Before a person may be held in contempt for

violating a court order, the order should inform him in definite terms as to the duties thereby imposed upon him, and the command must therefore be express rather than implied.” *Id.* at 867.

[T]he question of whether a contempt has occurred is for the trial court, and its determination will be overturned only if there has been a gross abuse of discretion. Once an act has been determined to constitute contempt of court, the action the court takes to deal with the contempt determines whether the contempt is deemed ‘criminal’ contempt or ‘civil’ contempt. The distinction between criminal and civil contempt is that *criminal contempt imposes unconditional punishment for prior contempt, to preserve the court's authority and to punish disobedience of its orders.*


Yntema v. Smith, 371 Ga. App. 19, 28, 899 S.E.2d 543, 553 (2024) (emphasis added).

“Direct summary criminal contempt which arises in the presence of the court and tends to scandalize it and hinder or obstruct the orderly processes of the administration of justice, the preservation of order and decorum in the court, etc. is exempt from the due process requirements of notice and hearing.”

Moody v. State, 131 Ga. App. 355, 206 S.E.2d 79 (1974).

Accordingly, **IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that, pursuant the Court’s authority under O.C.G.A. § 15-1-3(3), the Court holds Mr. Steel in direct criminal contempt for failure to comply with the Court’s order. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that Mr. Steel shall be taken into the custody of the Fulton County Sheriff and incarcerated at the Fulton County Jail for no more than twenty (20) days for this contempt, with those twenty days consisting of every weekend for the next ten (10) weekends. Mr. Steel is to report to the Fulton County Jail, 901 Rice Street NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30318, at 7:00 PM on Fridays, and will be released at 7:00 PM on Sundays. Mr. Steel’s incarceration is to start this Friday, June 14, 2024 at 7:00 PM and is not to end until Sunday, August 18, 2024 at 7:00 PM, subject to further order of the Court.

SO ORDERED this 10th day of June, 2024.



The Honorable Ural Glanville, Chief Judge
Superior Court of Fulton County