

25 November 2017

Memorandum
The President of the Republic of South Africa
Mr Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma
The Union Buildings
Government Ave
Elandspoord 357-Jr
PRETORIA
0002

Dear Mr Zuma

RE: THE SCOURGE OF FARM ATTACKS

We, citizens of the Republic of South Africa, are standing outside your office today to bring the plight of South African farmers and farm workers under your immediate attention. We bring this to your attention, because we believe that all other avenues to solve this problem has proved to be fruitless. We also wish to inform you with this memorandum that, should the crisis at hand not be resolved, we would resort to an intensified international campaign to raise awareness about the plight of South African farmers.

Mr President, you have stated repeatedly that job creation is and should be your government's number one priority. You have also stated that in a just society, no-one should go to bed hungry. We stand here today, not only as employers and job creators, but also as the producers of food.

You have stated that the agricultural community should create one million jobs by the year 2030. We stand here today as a community that is being targeted disproportionately in vicious and murderous attacks. Currently there are roughly 32 000 commercial farmers left in South Africa, down from 128 000 in 1980 and 58 000 in 1997. These farmers are being attacked and killed in complete disproportionate levels and often in the most brutal ways imaginable. A calculation of the murder ratio per 100 000 indicates that South African commercial farmers are 26 times more likely to become the victims of murder than the global average, four and a half times more likely than the average South African and almost three times more likely than the average South African police officer. This calculation is made with reference to commercial farmers only. A similar calculation with regard to all the victims of farm attacks cannot be made, due to a lack of reliable data. Despite this, it is fair to conclude that farm workers are also targeted and murdered in many of these attacks.

Mr President, we stand outside your office today because we have noticed how the South African government has systematically deprioritised its response to farm attacks over a time period stretching more than a decade. We have also noticed how these attacks have increased in the past six years, not only in frequency, but also in brutality.

We are disturbed by governments' apathetic attitude regarding the safety and security situation in South Africa at large, but in particular in rural areas where food for the nation is produced. The state has a primary responsibility to ensure the safety of citizens and unfortunately it is sadly failing its duty in this regard. The lack of political will to create a safe

and secure environment and the absence of a capable and properly trained, staffed and equipped South African Police Service (SAPS) is indicative of a sad and dangerous situation.

We were also shocked when the announcement was made in 2007 that no further statistics of farm attacks and farm murders would be released. We regarded this as a second major step in the deprioritisation of these attacks, especially since the use of updated data is a crucial step in the combatting of any crime.

We were again shocked in 2010 when the ruling party, of which you were already the president at the time, went to court to protect its alleged right to sing struggle songs such as *Dubula i'Bhunu* (Shoot the Boer) in which the murder of South African farmers is romanticised. We were shocked when members of the ruling party crumpled up a document which contained the names of people that have been murdered on South Africa's farms, jumping on it and kicking it into the street, in full view of TV cameras. We regard this as another step in the deprioritisation of these attacks.

Furthermore, we were shocked in 2012 when the Minister of Police refused to meet victims, whose loved ones have been murdered on their farms and even refused to accept their memorandum. We were shocked in 2013 when the Minister of Police issued a press statement, claiming that those who call for the prioritising of these attacks do so because they seek attention.

We were shocked in 2014 when Bernadette Hall, who was attacked on her farm and whose husband was murdered, was aggressively shoved out of the Department of Police's lobby when she tried to deliver a letter to the Minister at reception.

We were again shocked in 2015 when a representative of the South African government stated at a United Nations (UN) Conference in Geneva that the call for the prioritisation of farm murders should not be heeded, because those who want farmers to be protected are only saying this because they are trying to "bring back apartheid". We were also shocked when the same representative stated that the outcry over these attacks should not be taken seriously, because the real problem was (according to her) that farmers are only murdering themselves.

We were again shocked in 2017 when thousands of people protested against farm murders in South Africa and the Minister of Police responded, saying that those who call for the prioritisation of farm murders are supporters of ISIS, the Ku Klux Klan, Adolf Hitler and a "fascist mafia".

Mr President, we can present to you a list containing the names of roughly 2 000 people who have been murdered on South Africa's farms. We believe that these crimes are unique for the following reasons:

1. The unique frequency at which these attacks take place. Since the beginning of 2017 on average more than one farm attack has taken place every single day, and almost two farm murders every week;
2. The unique levels of brutality. Many of the victims are not only murdered, but tortured for hours. Methods of torture include the dragging of victims behind pickup trucks over dirt roads, burning with boiling water or cooking oil, freezing of victims, excessive stabbing with sharp objects, drilling of holes through the victims' feet, strangulation, raping, forcing parents to witness the murder of their children (and vice versa), cutting off of body parts;

3. The unique role that farmers have to play. We have already stated that farmers are not only individuals, but also food producers and employers. We also know that the murder of a farmer frequently leads to a complete halt in production on that farm; and
4. The unique circumstances that farmers find themselves in, where they are far away from police stations and from their neighbours.

In the light of everything mentioned above, we believe that the South African government is complicit in the problem, as a result of its no-care attitude toward this problem. Therefore, we demand that the following measures be put in place:

1. A guarantee that statistics about farm attacks and farm murders be released each year, together with the South African crime statistics;
2. An update of the Rural Safety Strategy, to include a particular emphasis on steps that could be taken to prevent farm attacks and to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice;
3. A fulfilment of the promise that an alternative to the Commando System would be instituted, in a way to empower farmers to look after their own safety more effectively, with the financial backing and support of the South African government;
4. The proper empowerment of the SAPS by removing corrupt members, ensuring effective training and providing the appropriate equipment;
5. The inclusion of farm attacks as a core priority of the Hawks;
6. The establishment of specialised rural safety units; and
7. Strict measures to bring political leaders who romanticise farm attacks, or any form of violence towards farmers, to justice.

We sincerely hope that the spiral of deprioritisation will be broken with this event and that you will agree with us about the severity of this problem.

We kindly request your response within seven days of receipt of this memorandum.

In anticipation of your response

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