

12 October 2023

The President of South Africa
Mr MC Ramaphosa
Private Bag X1000
PRETORIA
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Delivery per hand

Dear Mr President

MEMORANDUM: THE REALITY OF FARM MURDERS, A POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF INACTION, INCITEMENT AND DENIAL, AND THE RESPONSE FROM COMMUNITY SAFETY STRUCTURES

I write this memorandum in my capacity as the CEO of the civil rights organisation AfriForum and as a representative of our more than 315 000 members from across the country. A political environment has been created in this country that puts the lives of farmers at acute risk and that necessitates decisive and concrete action from the government or from communities themselves.

Because government is failing in its duty to protect the citizens of this country – in particular the farming community – and some politicians are denying or even encouraging the scourge of farm murders, communities are left with no choice but to organise themselves and to start playing a growing role in their own safety and security.

Denial

In an interview with *Bloomberg News* in New York in 2018 you made the claim that

there are no killings of farmers or white farmers in South Africa.

You have yet to retract and apologise for this demonstrably false claim. In 2020, EFF leader Julius Malema made a similar claim at a rally by quoting you almost verbatim:

There is [sic] no farm murders in South Africa. There are no white farmers being killed in South Africa.

Apart from these examples of blatant denial, the government refuses to this day to classify farm murders as priority crimes, despite the overwhelming evidence and arguments legitimising such a classification.

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• **Registration number:** 2005/042861/08 • **NGO number:** 054 - 590

Incitement

High profile politicians and their supporters continue to incite violence against minorities – in particular farmers – with impunity. In July 2023 Julius Malema chanted “Kill the Boer, kill the farmer” in front of a stadium of 90 000 supporters, who joined in. In the time between this incident and 11 October, there occurred 68 farm attacks and ten farm murders. In one particular attack a couple from KwaZulu-Natal were severely assaulted on their farm while their attackers shouted: “Kill the Boer, kill the farmer!”

As the evidence keeps mounting that chants like “Kill the Boer” have in fact devastating real-world consequences, it becomes increasingly easy for those who choose to ignore or excuse it to appear unsympathetic towards violent crime victims when they happen to be farmers.

Failure

A recent AfriForum report revealed that out of the 1 402 farm attacks and farm murder incidents that the South African Police Service (SAPS) had recorded between 2019 and 2022, convictions were obtained in only 66 cases. This means that more than 95% of all these atrocities are still unsolved. Weak investigative work, ineffective prosecutions and a clear unwillingness of the government to address rural safety and farm attacks in particular are the most likely reasons for these shocking statistics.

Response

AfriForum currently has over 168 neighbourhood and farm watches countrywide with more or less 11 000 well-trained volunteers. We will be greatly increasing the resources that we allocate towards expanding these safety networks and continue to train more volunteers to fight back against the scourge of these attacks on farmers. We will ensure that an increasing number of farmers and civilians are equipped with the skills and equipment that are necessary to do whatever it takes to defend themselves and their families against the criminals who threaten their lives – especially in rural areas. AfriForum’s safety structures will also continue to work closely and maintain good relations with local SAPS stations (which we have done with great success over the years) and ensure that all our activities fall within the confines of the law.

In a political environment characterised by denial of, inaction regarding and even incitement of farm murders and attacks, AfriForum is doing our part in helping the affected communities to respond. We will welcome an end to the denial of this pressing issue by the government in the future, or when the government eventually decides to treat the issue of farm murders with the seriousness that it deserves.

In the meantime, however, communities will not sit idly by and wait for the state to take action, or that the very real and unique issues that they are facing simply be

acknowledged rather than denied. Governments who fail in their duties make the rise of robust community-based alternatives inevitable. We will ensure our own safety and security to the best of our abilities, and recent years have proven the effectiveness of our ability to increasingly do so.

Your sincerely

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