



Communications

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67 killed on farms last year, stats reveal

PRETORIA — A total of 67 people were murdered on farms across South Africa in 2014, AfriForum said yesterday.

“We are releasing the statistics because the government, particularly the Police Department, has been refusing to release any information about farm attacks since 2007,” deputy AfriForum CEO Ernst Roets told reporters in Pretoria.

The statistics were jointly released by AfriForum and the Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAU SA).

“We have found that in the last five years there has been a gradual increase, not only in farm attacks, but also in farm murders across South Africa,” said Roets.

In a bid to curb the farm attacks, Roets said the two organisations would be implementing several strategies, which include protests.

“We need to follow a double strategy. One area of focus is a campaign to put pressure on government through the media, protest rallies and so forth.

“The other part is to get communities more involved. We are saying people should look after their own safety,

people should be aware of the problem and get involved with community safety structures,” said Roets.

The statistics indicate that there were 277 farm attacks that the two organisations could verify in 2014.

The organisations’ statistics show that the number of murders on farms rose from 62 in 2013 to 67 in 2014.

Farm attacks rose from 231 to 277 in the same period.

They said this was the highest figure recorded since 1990. A total of nine murders on farms have already been recorded this year.

TAU SA assistant general manager Chris van Zyl said the number of commercial farmers was decreasing annually.

“From 2006, the number of farm murders is within the 60 to 67 range. Given the reality that the number of farmers are decreasing annually, that is very concerning,” said Van Zyl.

He said farm residents should take charge of their own security.

Earlier this week, Deputy Agriculture Minister Bheki Cele said farm killings were not racially motivated.

“We are urging everybody, starting with the media and everybody — take the race issue out of farm murders,” Cele said.

“The people that are being killed are farmers ... Whether they are white, black, yellow, green or purple, we have seen farmers coming under attack and we treat it as such,” he said.

Yesterday, Van Zyl said analysis showed that the majority of murdered victims were white.

“We don’t want to racialise it. My figures indicate that farmers, black and white, are the single greatest group within the murdered victims’ environment,” he said.

“All we are saying is that the vast majority of murder victims in the country are farmers. If we analyse the victims, the majority are white farmers.”

Cele said the Agriculture Department had a limited role in combating the murders.

“Agriculture cannot say we will arrest those that kill the farmers. We wish we could, but we can’t. We cannot say we will shoot them,” said the former police commissioner. — Sapa.