



Women on Farms Project Press Statement
Rape and Assault by Rawsonville Farmers
13 September 2006

The Women on Farms Project is a non-governmental organisation with more than ten years experience of working with women on the farm lands.

What is unusual about this case is not that it happened at all, but that the survivors eventually found the support and courage to speak up. We know violence in general, and violence against women in specific, is very pervasive on farms.

Five months down the line, the survivors are no closer to getting justice. There is little evidence of progress on these cases and the police have failed to protect them from on-going threats from the farmers.

This assault clearly shows that the state institutions charged with protecting the rights of farm worker communities have dismally failed to do so. In this context, what options do farm workers have but to protect themselves?

This attack must be understood in a context in which farmers act with absolute impunity. We have yet to see a farmer go to prison for violating the rights of a farm worker, including the mass ongoing evictions from farms.

We reaffirm our longstanding call for an emergency moratorium on evictions and increased efforts to protect the human rights of farm workers. We call on our government to take seriously its mandate as the protector of the rights of the vulnerable.

The laws we have in place must be enforced. And where the laws are broken, we need to see consequences. These attacks are driven by racism and constitute a profound human rights violation of a community of people who are citizens of South Africa despite their location on private farms.

The time has come to stop indulging farmers. This was a serious crime and Women on Farms will fight to see that these men get arrested without an option of bail!

END