

# **Mr President, come out of hiding and address farm murders**

By Andrew Whitfield MP - DA Shadow Minister of Police

In 1998 former President *Nelson* Mandela addressed a summit on rural safety and security in Midrand where he said: (and I quote)

*“The government deplors the cold blooded killings that have been taking place on the farms in the past few years.*

*It threatens to bring reduced growth or production, loss of wages and profits and in time unemployment. It brings the spectre of deepening poverty, and potential social instability and upheaval.*

*For all these reasons, we must stop these killings at once. And we must act together in doing so, for there is no other way to succeed.”*

22 years ago our President stood up and provided leadership on difficult issues.

He confronted with tremendous courage the harsh realities of a complex nation and had the foresight to appreciate the implications for our economy and our food security if our farmers feel unsafe. President Mandela understood why rural safety must be a priority.

Today, we have a President who is in complete and utter denial on the issue of rural safety. He is a President who says that there are no murders of farmers in South Africa while he buries his head in the blood stained sand.

Mr President, take your head out of the sand and lead.

Your children are eating wild plants and leaves to survive in the Eastern Cape. Let our farmers feed them without the fear that they will be attacked or killed.

Farm attacks and murders must once again be treated as a priority and if the President won't lead perhaps our Minister of Police will do something. He seems to be calling the shots anyway.

Minister, it is time to reclassify farm attacks and murders as priority crimes so that SAPS can, through a well-resourced and coordinated strategy, start to disrupt the criminal networks responsible for these heinous crimes and transition from reaction to prevention.

The success of this strategy will be determined by the reintroduction of fully outfitted specialised units dedicated to protecting our rural communities, and apprehending any attackers who get onto a farm or smallholding to attack and steal.

We need a budget that will bolster our crime intelligence networks strengthen the investigative capacity of SAPS. This budget should be supporting more boots on the ground and drones in the sky in rural areas not policing curfews and harassing business owners.

The Minister has already expressed his concern about farm murders and the national police commissioner has already agreed to provide more funding to support rural safety but what we really need is less words and more urgent action to put an end to the brutal killings and attacks in our rural communities.