

Document #1447415

IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

South Africa: Situation of white South Africans, including treatment by government and society; state protection available to white South African victims of violence; information on the white South African community, as well as political and/or rights groups (2014-September 2018) [ZAF106171.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

Sources indicate that the population of South Africa is approximately 56.7 or 57.7 million (South Africa 20 July 2018; World Bank 6 July 2018). According to sources, white South Africans make up eight or nine percent of the total population (*The Guardian* 23 Aug. 2018; Campbell 30 Aug. 2018; Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018; *WSJ* 23 Aug. 2018). Sources indicate that there is a linguistic divide among white South Africans, namely between Afrikaans speakers and English speakers (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018; Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, John Campbell [1], who is the Ralph Bunche Senior Fellow for Africa policy studies at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in Washington, DC, stated that “[b]etween these two groups, there is no difference in their access to wealth or their political representation” (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018). Sources indicate that white South Africans are in a privileged position in South African society (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018; Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). Campbell explained that white South Africans

are substantially wealthier than other racial groups. The net wealth of black South Africans is only about five percent of the average net wealth of white South Africans. White South Africans in South Africa live in the “First World”; their social and economic standard of living is similar to that in Eastern Europe or Israel. (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018)

Sources indicate that white South Africans dominate in:

- business (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018; SAHRC 7 Sept. 2018);
- media (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018);
- politics (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018);
- legal services (SAHRC 7 Sept. 2018); and
- academia (SAHRC 7 Sept. 2018).

2. Treatment of White South Africans in Society and by the Government

Sources indicate that white South Africans do not face any specific challenges or threats in society (SAHRC 7 Sept. 2018; Campbell 30 Aug. 2018; Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018), “for example, in terms of access to employment, education, health or housing” (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Vice-Chancellor of Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg, who is also a political science professor, explained that

[i]n terms of accessing public health care and public education, white South Africans face the same issues that black South Africans do. However, black South Africans are burdened more because of their access to resources. For example, black South Africans do not have the same resources as white South Africans to buy private health care. (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018)

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative from AfriForum, a non-governmental “Afrikaner interest organisation and civil rights watchdog” that aims to “protec[t] the rights of minorities” (AfriForum n.d.), stated that there is “[n]o legislation ... that specifically discriminates against white South Africans” in terms of health care (AfriForum 7 Sept. 2018).

Campbell stated that “[t]he South African government is explicitly non-racial” (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018). The Vice-Chancellor similarly stated that “[p]ublic services and policies apply to many and to all” (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). The AfriForum representative indicated, however, that Afrikaans language rights and education are “under attack,” as language policies are being changed, for example, at universities, to exclude the use of Afrikaans, adding that “efforts to protect the language rights of students is ... vilified as ... efforts to protect ‘white privilege’” (AfriForum 7 Sept. 2018).

2.1 Government Policies

ecoi.net summary:

Query response on the situation of Caucasian South Africans (2014 - September 2018) (treatment by society and government; political discourse; land redistribution; other topics)



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According to sources, there are black economic empowerment programs that are similar to the affirmative action programs in the US (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018; Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018), "which are measures directed to assisting black South Africans in particular" (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). According to the Vice-Chancellor, "[t]hese affirmative action policies target black South Africans and, in that sense, white South Africans do not qualify" (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). According to Campbell, "[t]here are complaints ... from some white South Africans that various black economic empowerment programs ... make it difficult to access employment" (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018). According to the AfriForum representative, "[a] policy of affirmative action is applied in South Africa that [does not have a] sunset clause. As a result, white South Africans are often not even considered for positions, whether they have the necessary skills, qualifications and experience, or not" (AfriForum 7 Sept. 2018). Sources indicate that the unemployment rate of white South Africans is lower than that of black South Africans (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018; Campbell 30 Aug. 2018; Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018). According to Al Jazeera, in 2017, "30 percent of ... black South Africans were unemployed compared with 6.7 percent of" white South Africans (Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018). The Vice-Chancellor explained that "[w]hite South African unemployment is less than 3 percent, [while] the unemployment rate of black South Africans ... is approximately between 50 and 60 percent" (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018).

2.2 Political Discourse

The AfriForum representative indicated that "[r]acial tension is running high at the moment" and that "hate speech abounds" in South Africa (AfriForum 7 Sept. 2018). According to the Vice-Chancellor, "[t]here is a discourse in South Africa where a small set of political actors have racialized approaches to understanding society, like the Economic Freedom Fighters [EFF]" (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). According to sources, the EFF is the third largest political party in South Africa (Campbell 8 Aug. 2018; Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018), "largely because of its advocacy of 'expropriation without compensation' of white wealth in general, [and] farmland and mines specifically" (Campbell 8 Aug. 2018). The Vice-Chancellor explained that the EFF

place[s] rhetoric in racial terms. They will describe the capitalized economy as a white monopoly economy. They will phrase it as a racialized logic. By no means is it a majority-held rhetoric. There is no indication or evidence that there is violence that has resulted on the basis of this rhetoric. (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018)

According to the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC), the EFF secured 8.31 percent of the total votes in the 2016 local government elections (South Africa 11 Aug. 2016) and 6.35 percent of the total votes in the 2014 national elections (South Africa 12 May 2014). Sources indicate that, in 2016, the leader of the EFF called on his followers to occupy the "land that was taken ... by white people by force through genocide" (*The Guardian* 26 June 2018; Reuters 14 Nov. 2016; AFP 7 Mar. 2017).

2.3 Land Redistribution and Reform

According to the *Guardian*, when apartheid ended in 1994, 85 percent of agricultural land was owned by white farmers (*The Guardian* 26 June 2018). Sources indicate that land redistribution and reform was introduced in the South African political discourse in 1994 (Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018; *Forbes* 14 Mar. 2018). Sources indicate that 72 percent of agricultural land is currently owned by white farmers (South Africa Nov. 2017, 2; CBS with AFP 23 Aug. 2018). The *Guardian* states that "much" of the land held by white farmers is "in the hands of the ... Afrikaner community" (*The Guardian* 26 June 2018).

Sources report that the South African president announced on 31 July or 1 August 2018 that there are plans to change the constitution to allow for the expropriation of land without compensation (Reuters 7 Sept. 2018; *The Guardian* 23 Aug. 2018; CNN 23 Aug. 2018). Fox News reports that the South African president has "begun the process of seizing land from his own citizens, without compensation, purely due to their skin color" (Fox News 22 Aug. 2018). CNN states, however, that "[f]arm seizures, as described in the Fox [News] report, are not ongoing in South Africa" (CNN 23 Aug. 2018). The South African online publication News24 states that the South African deputy president "promised that no farms would be invaded or grabbed and that farmers did not have to fear for their well-being" (News24 23 Aug. 2018).

According to the *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)*, "[u]nder South African law, land owners ... have the right to challenge any government action to take away land without compensation in court" (*WSJ* 23 Aug. 2018). The same source states that until now, "agrarian reform [in South Africa] has been led by voluntary sales by white farmers and other property owners to the government at market prices under a policy known as 'willing seller, willing buyer'" (*WSJ* 23 Aug. 2018). Reuters similarly reports that "[s]ince the end of apartheid in 1994, the [African National Congress (ANC), the party in power,] has followed a 'willing-seller, willing-buyer' model under which the government buys white-owned farms for redistribution to blacks" (Reuters 7 Sept. 2018).

2.4 Farm Attacks and Killings

Sources indicate that crime is a serious problem in South Africa (CNN 23 Aug. 2018; Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018; CBS with AFP 23 Aug. 2018). According to Campbell, "[t]here are no areas in South Africa that are dangerous for white South Africans per se; there are areas in South Africa that are dangerous for everybody" (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018). The AfriForum representative stated that "[t]here are, unfortunately, very few places in South Africa where it is safe for any person of any race or gender" (AfriForum 7 Sept. 2018). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) [2] explained that "white people ... experience less crime than other racial groups" in South Africa (SAHRC 7 Sept. 2018). The Vice-Chancellor stated that "[v]iolence is experienced more by black South Africans" (Vice-

Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). According to the Community Survey 2016 conducted by Statistics South Africa, “households headed by whites and Indian/Asians were more likely to be affected by crime than other population groups,” including housebreaking/burglary, home robbery, robbery, and theft of motor vehicle/motorcycle (South Africa 2016, 94). According to the same source, “in the 12 months preceding the survey,” “[a]pproximately one in ten households headed by whites experienced crime, followed by Indian/Asians (8,4%) while about 7,1% of those headed by black Africans were victimised” (South Africa 2016, 91). Sources indicate that white South Africans are heard more on crime-related issues, as they have more access to the media (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018; SAHRC 7 Sept. 2018), and that “[p]oor rural black South Africans do not have the ability to voice themselves in the same way [as white South Africans do]” (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). Sources indicate that white South Africans are able to live in better areas and pay for private security services (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018; SAHRC 7 Sept. 2018).

Sources indicate that there has been an increase in the number of farm attacks in South Africa (WSJ 23 Aug. 2018; Agri SA 19 Apr. 2018). According to an April 2018 press release by Agri SA [3] calling for urgent action against farm attacks, “[f]arm attacks have increased by 22 per cent” in 2018 (Agri SA 19 Apr. 2018). Citing data from the South African Police Service (SAPS), Agri SA reports the following yearly statistics on farm attacks in South Africa:

- 2012/2013 - 567 farm attacks
- 2013/2014 - 517 farm attacks
- 2014/2015 - 490 farm attacks
- 2015/2016 - 446 farm attacks
- 2016/2017 - 478 farm attacks
- 2017/2018 - 561 farm attacks (Agri SA 2018, 3).

The same source reports that during the period of 2012/2013 to 2017/2018,

24% of farm attacks ... occurred in North West, followed by Gauteng (21%), KwaZulu-Natal (15%) and the Free State (10%). With regard to farm attacks, the Northern Cape was the safest province at 1%, while North West was the most violent. (Agri SA 2018, 5)

According to data by the SAPS, in the year 2017/2018, there were 20,336 murders across South Africa, which represents an increase of 6.9 percent from the previous year (South Africa 11 Sept. 2018). Al Jazeera states that, according to police statistics, between 2016 and 2017, there were 74 farm killings, including farmers and workers of all racial groups in South Africa (Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018). The same source notes that, according to Agri SA, 47 farmers were killed between 2017 and 2018, which represents the “lowest [number] in 20 years” (Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018). The same source cites Agri SA’s Executive Director as stating that there is a “disproportionate number of farm murders” in South Africa (Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018). According to the Agri SA press release, the number of farm killings have increased 27 percent in 2018 (Agri SA 19 Apr. 2018). However, citing data from SAPS, Agri SA reports the following yearly statistics on farm killings in South Africa:

- 2012/2013 - 59 farm killings
- 2013/2014 - 57 farm killings
- 2014/2015 - 60 farm killings
- 2015/2016 - 49 farm killings
- 2016/2017 - 66 farm killings
- 2017/2018 - 47 farm killings (Agri SA 2018, 3).

The same source further explains that during the period of 2012/2013 to 2017/2018,

Gauteng recorded the most murders, namely 20%, followed by North West and KwaZulu-Natal recording the second highest incidence of murders, namely 18% each. ... [T]he Northern Cape at 1% was the province that recorded the lowest number of farm murders. (Agri SA 2018, 5)

Without providing further details, sources indicate that there have been cases of South African farmers who were subjected to torture during farm attacks (*The Guardian* 26 June 2018; News.com.au 17 Mar. 2018; RT 9 Apr. 2018).

According to *the Guardian*, “[t]here is fierce debate over the reason for the increase in attacks on farms in recent years. Some suggest it is in line with a general increase in violent crime. Others say it is a consequence of growing tensions between communities” (*The Guardian* 26 June 2018). According to sources, there are claims that white farmers are being targeted and killed (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018; Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018). *The Guardian* cites a former police officer and researcher at the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies (ISS) as stating that “[s]ome say [farm] attackers are motivated purely by racial hatred but it is very difficult to quantify” (*The Guardian* 26 June 2018). The Vice-Chancellor stated, without providing further details, that “[t]he intention behind [farm] attacks is not racial, but related to mental health issues” (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018).

In a blog post on the CFR website, Campbell states that “[t]he widespread killing of white farmers is a trope of AfriForum” and describes AfriForum as an organization “opposed to land reform on the basis that it is a threat to South Africa’s white population” (Campbell 23 Aug. 2018). According to a Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) article with Agence France-Presse (AFP), a CBS reporter is cited as stating that

there has been a well-funded campaign by white right-wing South Africans to promote the idea that white farmers are being deliberately killed at higher rates than people of other skin colors, and that this constitutes a ‘white genocide.’ There is no such thing in South Africa. (CBS with AFP 23 Aug. 2018)

According to the Vice-Chancellor, “[s]tatistics show that violent crimes against white farmers is lower today than 15 years ago. If there was genocidal intention against white South Africans, these statistics would be the opposite” (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). Sources indicate, however, that police statistics on farm murders are not recorded “by race” (Afrika Check 8 May 2017; BBC 3 Nov. 2017). The BBC explains that given the lack of current data on the number of farmers in South Africa and “what proportion of people on South Africa’s farms is white,” it is “impossible to say whether white farmers are more at risk than black farmers - or more at risk than the population at large” (BBC 3 Nov. 2017). According to the 2016 Community Survey of Statistics South Africa, 143,361 agricultural households out of 2,329,043 agricultural households have a white household head (South Africa 2016, 83). The BBC notes, however, that there is no data on the number of people in these households or “how many of the households are racially mixed”; this then makes it difficult to assess the likelihood a white South African farmer is to be killed (BBC 3 Nov. 2017).

Sources indicate that rural communities are more vulnerable to crime (CBS with AFP 23 Aug. 2018; Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018; Agri SA 2018, 5), because of the remoteness of properties (CBS with AFP 23 Aug. 2018; Agri SA 2018, 5) with “little protection” (CBS with AFP 23 Aug. 2018). According to Al Jazeera, however, there is “no evidence to suggest that farmers as a group suffer more attacks than any other demographic in the country” (Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018). The *Guardian* indicates that “[t]he isolation of farms and the limited protection provided by police are ... factors often cited to explain the level of violence in [farm] attacks” (*The Guardian* 26 June 2018). According to Agri SA’s report, the farming community has worked alongside organizations, such as the Agri Securitas Trust Fund and the police, to devise safety plans to protect farmers (Agri SA 2018, 6). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. State Protection Available to White South African Victims of Violence

According to the Vice-Chancellor, “[w]hile the crime rate remains high [in South Africa], police stations and the appropriate infrastructure to address the high crime rate are not always available” (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). According to sources, the state provides all South Africans who are victims of crimes the same services, irrespective of race (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018; AfriForum 7 Sept. 2018). The Vice-Chancellor explained that

state institutions ... are not as efficient as they need to be. ... There is state incompetence in some departments. These factors have impacts on citizens, regardless of race. Black citizens experience these impacts far more than white South Africans. (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018)

Sources indicate that state institutions like the SAHRC ensure that human rights are respected (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018; SAHRC 7 Sept. 2018). According to the Vice-Chancellor,

[a]nyone experiencing discrimination can report to [the SAHRC and the Public Protector]. The legal system in South Africa is vibrant. The press is robust, vibrant, alive and independent and holds political elites accountable. The media comes to [the] defence of its citizens, regardless of colour. (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018)

According to Campbell,

[t]here are state protection measures available to white South Africans who are victims of violence. For instance, the SAPS and the judiciary (which is quite independent) offer protection. To illustrate this point: if a person is attacked and robbed on the street, the police would investigate and arrest the perpetrator. The perpetrator is then tried in a court, and then sentenced to jail, without any reference to race. (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018)

Other sources similarly indicate that South Africa’s judiciary is “independent” (Al Jazeera 30 Aug. 2018) or “strong” (SAHRC 7 Sept. 2018).

4. Representation of White South Africans

Sources indicate that there are organizations that serve the interests of white South Africans (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018; Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018), “for example, Agri SA” (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018) or AfriForum (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018). According to the Vice-Chancellor, “[t]here are ... civil society organizations, like Afrikaans language organizations, representing the interest of Afrikaners” (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018).

According to Campbell, “[w]hite South Africans are active politically, particularly in the political party the Democratic Alliance (DA), which is the official opposition party” (Campbell 30 Aug. 2018). According to the CEO of the SAHRC, the political parties Freedom Front and the DA have “traditionally promoted the interests of white people and ensure that there is no unfair discrimination of white

people as a group” (SAHRC 7 Sept. 2018). Reuters indicates that the DA has “many white supporters” (Reuters 14 Nov. 2016). According to the Vice-Chancellor, South African political parties, including the ANC, the DA, and the EFF, are “all officially non-racial parties; they represent the interests of all South Africans” (Vice-Chancellor 4 Sept. 2018).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] John Campbell is a retired United States Ambassador whose overseas postings included Pretoria; he has published on post-Apartheid South Africa in his book *Morning in South Africa* (CFR n.d.).

[2] The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) is “the national institution established to support constitutional democracy. It is committed to promote respect for, observance of and protection of human rights for everyone without fear or favour” (SAHRC n.d.).

[3] Agri SA is “a federation of agricultural organisations [and] was established in 1904 as the South African Agricultural Union” (Agri SA n.d.). “Through its affiliated membership, [Agri SA] represents a diverse grouping of individual farmers regardless of gender, colour or creed” (Agri SA n.d.).

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Oral sources: Academics specializing in human rights issues in South Africa; Agri SA; Centre for Development and Enterprise; Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation; Civicus; Council on Foreign Relations; Helen Suzman Foundation; Human Rights Watch; Institute for Security Studies; Minority Rights Group International; Solidariteit; South African Institute for Race Relations; South African journalist; Transvaal Agricultural Union.

Internet sites, including: American Broadcasting Company (ABC); Consumer News and Business Channel (CNBC); ecoi.net; *Financial Times*; *Gulf Times*; *The Independent* (London); Independent Online; TimesLIVE; UN – Refworld.

Austrian Red Cross Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)	Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583 F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589 info@ecoi.net
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