

## White commercial and black subsistence farmers still face eviction in Zim

Sunday Times SA by Sharon Mazingaizo

8 January 2023



*Couple given 48 hours to pack up everything and leave the farm where they had lived for 32 years. Photo supplied.*

As many celebrated the festive season, Shane Warth and his wife, Denise, were evicted from their farm.

They had lived on Mpapa Farm outside Triangle in Masvingo province for 32 years. On December 29, they were given 48 hours to vacate the premises.

“How does anyone pack up 32 years in 48 hours? A sheriff, a locksmith and 15 men forced their way onto the farm, cut the locks to our property and started removing our belongings and furniture to dump it 50 metres from the yard,” said 65-year-old Shane.

Being evicted from our farm after 32 years has physical and financial consequences. I am supposed to be retiring, but now I am starting afresh. After the eviction, we found another place to stay, but everything we own is in boxes. The farm was our whole life. We did sugar cane farming, employing 20 people. We built a history, relationships, and just to walk away from it all is heartbreaking.”

It’s been a long court battle trying to keep the 50ha farm.

In 2017 the property was acquired by the government for resettlement. Warth was ordered to wind down farming activities, but he stayed on and fought the eviction. In 2019 he was found guilty of overstaying, and ordered to leave immediately, but he fought on.

“After nearly four years of fighting, I lost the court case. I am bitter and this is gross injustice. We have been on the farm since 1989. I hear the authorities say white commercial farmers can’t be here, they don’t want us here.

“The government said land reform was over, but it’s not. The eviction also left me with legal costs. In a strange way I feel a bit lucky. Some farmers who were evicted left with nothing but the clothes on their backs. At least I left with my tractors, which I plan to sell.”

In 2000, more than 4,500 white commercial farmers during the violent evictions. Their properties were redistributed to black farmers to redress colonial imbalances.

In 2020, the government signed a US\$3.5 bn deal as compensation for white farmers, but last year it proposed changing the terms of the deal after missing payments.

“The latest farm evictions demonstrate there is incoherence from the Zimbabwean government on its land policy,” said political analyst Rashweat Mukundu.

When [President] Emmerson Mnangagwa came to power, indications from the government were that the land distribution exercise was done and if there was land to be sold and reallocated, this had to meet the laws of the country.

“But this policy confusion is coming from a lack of discipline, it’s coming from politicization, nepotism and corruption in the system. So essentially, those remaining white farmers are not safe. There is a likelihood that should any official decide they need this land, they can use their political muscle to push out any farmer.

“It’s not only white farmers who are being targeted. Some black farmers – poor, rural subsistence farmers, the ones who were settled on repossessed land – are also victims of dispossession. The overall assessment is that the Zimbabwean government has a very confused land policy which does not give investors confidence,” said Mukundu.

In early 2022, Zimbabwe began repossessing unused land from black farmers who benefited from former President Robert Mugabe’s land reform project.

Ben Freeth, a former commercial farmer in the Chegutu area of Mashonaland West, said the government didn’t respect property rights,

“The farm evictions are not over. The government has scant regard for property rights and the rule of law, and is not sincere when it says it has ended farm takeovers, as we can see in the Warth eviction,” he said.

[Note: This is a subscription only article]

[https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/news/2023-01-08-white-commercial-and-black-subsistence-farmers-still-face-eviction-in-zim/?utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Twitter#Echobox=1673163440-3](https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/news/2023-01-08-white-commercial-and-black-subsistence-farmers-still-face-eviction-in-zim/?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1673163440-3)

**Further reading:**

<https://www.cfuzim.com/2019/03/07/mwenezi-white-farmer-ordered-off-farm-3-others-face-eviction/>

<https://www.cfuzim.com/2018/01/02/white-farmers-still-being-kicked-out-of-zim-farms/>

<https://www.moneyweb.co.za/news/africa/time-goes-backwards-in-zimbabwe/>