

## Germany shows what can be done in Zim

THE ZIMBABWE GOVERNMENT ordered an armed gang off three agricultural plantations in the east of the country, belonging to German national Heinrich von Pezold, after Germany threatened to withdraw aid to Zimbabwe.

On the same day in Chipinge, South African citizen Mike Odendaal was arrested on his farm Wolwedraai for refusing to vacate his property. The South African embassy secured his release, but it was the first time the embassy had intervened after several requests for help from Odendaal.

Civil rights group AfriForum and South African farmers in Zimbabwe facing similar threats said the two events indicate how little the South African government cares for its citizens abroad.

"I've written to Imraan Simmins at the South African Embassy pointing out that the South African government potentially has a lot more leverage in Zimbabwe than Germany, and yet Germany is producing results for its citizens," said Ian Ferguson, whose Denlyian ranch near Beit Bridge has been seized despite its supposed protection by a recently ratified South Africa/Zimbabwe bilateral investment protection agreement (Bipa).

Ferguson's game was slaughtered and his son faces charges of illegally occupying his own land.

"Simmins sent me a letter saying the Bipa agreement was meaningless in my case. He then wrote to apologise after being ticked off by the foreign affairs department, who said the South African government's position was not yet clear," said Ferguson.

He wrote to Simmins again when his son's case was remanded to 14 July 2010, saying this was an opportunity to inform the magistrate that this was considered a Bipa-protected property. "But of course I didn't get any reply," said Ferguson.

AfriForum lawyer Willie Spies said a number of other South African farmers are having problems. "A Mr Hapelt is being terrorised by invaders

in Somabhula; Geoff Carbutt has been arrested and prevented from accessing his own farm, and Gary Godfrey had his electricity cut off by local police, to name but a few," said Spies.

AfriForum CEO Kallie Kriel said his organisation intended using Mike Odendaal's case "to tackle the South African government over their lack of action".

They want to get the courts to see government isn't fulfilling the responsibilities to its own citizens, Kriel explained. "That way we can compel government to show how it intends to deal with the situation."

***'Instead of coming to the defence of its own citizens, the South African government invited Mugabe to the World Cup final.'***

Earlier this year, AfriForum successfully attached a number of Zimbabwean properties in South Africa on behalf of South African farmers who lost their livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

In July, the Zimbabwe government brought an urgent application to prevent AfriForum from selling the properties.

However, some of the same properties were attached by lawyers for German bank KfW Bankengruppe, which is owed US\$150 million (R1,1 billion) by Zimbabwe's state-owned steel company Zisco.

"I believe the German bank wasn't interdicted like we were," said Kriel. "If they go ahead with their own sales of attached properties, there's nothing we can do to stop them.

"The bottom line is the Germans have shown what can be done. But instead of coming to the defence of its own citizens the South African government invited Mugabe to the World Cup final. When he's treated softly like that there's no reason for his government to stop persecuting South African farmers." – Sean Christie