**CSAAWU Media Statement**

**CSAAWU strongly condemns recent violence**

**20 March 2022**

The Commercial Stevedore Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU) strongly condemns the recent violence between Lesotho and Zimbabwean nationals which took place in Nkqubela, Robertson in the Western Cape on 17 March 2022.

About 200 people, mostly women and children, were forced to evacuate the area and seek refuge at a nearby police station, almost 20 people were injured and several homes were broken into with some burnt down.

This violence is a direct result of labour rights violations in the agricultural sector including the exploitation of immigrant farmworkers, precarious ‘piecemeal’ contracts, and the use of labour brokers. The casualisation of farm work for low paying seasonal contracts, with no employment benefits, has made the use of labour brokers more prevalent. Labour brokers seem to favour contracting immigrant farmworkers who then get exploited as a form of cheap labour in the sector.

The recent violence is a natural consequence of the inhumane working and living conditions farmworkers must endure. Farmers must be held accountable for how the continued exploitation of vulnerable workers is destabilising the agricultural sector.

CSAAWU calls on the Minister of Employment and Labour to urgently intervene and meet with all stakeholders in the agricultural sector to find long term sustainable solutions regarding the use of labour brokers and their impact on the sector.

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