



# Sanef slams strikers' attack on journalists

The SA National Editors' Forum (Sanef) has condemned what it terms "the vicious attack" by striking farmworkers on *Cape Times*' journalists covering the workers' unprotected strike at De Doorns in the Western Cape on 9 January and has called on the police to arrest the attackers and prosecute them.



The journalists fortunately escaped with light injuries before their car was overturned and set on fire on the N1 highway. The car was totally destroyed and the following day an attempt was made to use it to block the highway.

Sanef has also condemned the failure of the officials of the Black Agricultural Workers' Union (Bawusa) who called the strike to protect the journalists from attack and the failure of the union officials and leaders of Cosatu to censure the strikers for the attack. The journalists were engaged on covering the strike in a professionally impartial manner on assignment by the *Cape Times*.

## Union officials inciting violence?

Apart from their lives being endangered Sanef says it cannot imagine a more counter-productive activity by the strikers in launching the attack and so trying to prevent the journalists from reporting on their complaints about their wages and conditions of employment and conveying that story to the public at large.

Sanef also says it is deeply alarmed that the attack may have been incited by the union officials when they called on the strikers to protest vigorously and to blockade the N1 highway with stones and other obstructions.

Sanef is also concerned at the wider chilling effect the attack can have on journalists assigned to cover such strikes. Some may be subject to fears that entry to an area of strike unrest could result in more attacks in which they run the risk of being harmed or seriously injured.

Sanef says it reminds union officials that the media and its journalists have a duty to report on strikes in the public interest and that as unarmed observers of events they must have adequate protection.