

Dumped on the highway after working for 10 years

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JOHANNESBURG — Ten years of democracy have brought a grim reward to a retired Western Cape couple — they were evicted and dumped on the side of the road with all their possessions.

Farmworker Frikkie Pypers, 73, his wife Katriena, 70, and their children and grandchildren have lived on a citrus farm north of Cape Town since 1994.

On Friday the sheriff of the court arrived at their cottage, loaded them up with their furniture and dumped them under a tree between the N7 highway and the farming village of Citrusdal.

The local council later offered them a tent to sleep in, but they opted to stay with relatives.

"They feel very disappointed and heartsore about this," said their daughter, Magrieta Pypers, 26. "We've lived happily in this house

all these years and now they just throw us out on the street."

The move sparked community protests which turned violent. Citrusdal police confirmed yesterday that a large, "riotous" crowd converged on the farm late on Friday.

"It took some time to disperse them," said Citrusdal police spokesperson William Reid. "We are investigating a case of holding an illegal gathering and riotous behaviour." By yesterday afternoon no arrests had been made.

Local activists say this is just the latest of a string of cases in the region of racist magistrates siding with white farmers against black farmworkers.

"This shows the current laws can't protect the rights of farmworkers," said Andries Titus, an organiser for the Surplus People Project.

According to land affairs officials, orange farmer Hennie Burger

decided to evict Pypers and his family after dismissing him following a labour dispute.

A land affairs report submitted in 2001 to the Land Claims Court, which automatically reviews eviction cases in terms of the Extension of Security of Tenure Act, recommended the eviction order should not be granted.

Reasons cited included the trauma it would cause the Pypers because of their age and the local council's inability to offer suitable alternative accommodation.

But last October the land claims court upheld the eviction order because the Pypers had not been living on the farm for the minimum of 10 years required by the act.

A report published by the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies last year pointed out that the act had generally proved ineffectual in protecting tenure rights of farm workers.