

## **Public Statement by ILRIG**

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The International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG) strongly condemns the shooting with live ammunition, of casual workers and activists by Germiston based Golden Bakery and its hired gunmen.

The shooting happened this last Saturday (24 June) when members of the Simunye Workers Forum (SWF) and Casual Workers Advise Office (CWAO) held a peaceful march to request Golden Bakery's owner to provide confirmation letters of employment for workers at the Golden Bakery so that the workers could go to Home Affairs on Monday to re-apply for their work permits. The Golden Bakery workers had been working there for between 7 and 15 years and the employer had never asked them for their work permits before. But as soon as they started organising and wanting their Basic Conditions of Employment Act rights, the employer threatened to have them deported unless they came up with work permits.

Instead of acceding to the request the employer threatened the marchers with his 'iinkabi' (sniper gunmen). Soon thereafter these gunmen opened fire with live rounds, shooting indiscriminately. As a result two SWF activists, two bystanders, and a CWAO Board member were shot and were all seriously injured. Two of the victims remain in critical condition. Three days on and there have been no proper investigations and no arrests from a Germiston police force that appears completely disinterested.

SWF and CWAO have been at the forefront of fighting for decent working conditions for casual workers and have both become important voices, calling for an end to the constant attacks on workers through outsourcing, exploitative working conditions, the violation of labour laws, intimidation and direct physical, violence. These shootings are the latest in a series of direct attacks on the hard-won victories of the working class to be able to organise and enjoy the right to association and assembly.

All freedom loving people should be outraged by this growing pattern of violence against workers and protestors in South Africa. Not only do they constitute serious crimes which must be punished, they confirm the impunity with which those with political and economic power (at whatever level) now act and the further shrinking of the democratic space in South Africa.

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