



PRESS STATEMENT

By

**OvaHerero/OvaMbanderu and Nama Council for the
Dialogue on the 1904-1908 Genocide
(ONCD 1904-1908)**

On

**GENOCIDE, APOLOGY AND REPARATION
(GAR)**

Windhoek, Tuesday August 18, 2020



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1. Introduction

We call this Press Conference today with the purpose to update you on pertinent issues related to the ongoing bilateral negotiations between the German Government on the one hand and the Namibian Government and the Representatives of the descendants of the victims of genocide on the other hand as per the Namibian National Assembly's motion adopted on October 26, 2006.

2. Historical background on the Genocide in Namibia

We would like to point out from the onset that prior to the genocidal war of 1904-1908, there were wars of resistance waged by the OvaMbanderu, OvaHerero and Nama people against German colonial occupation. In line with the principle of effective occupation adopted by the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, Europeans settlers including the German Imperial government needed to have large tracks of land in order to expand their colonial oppressive activities in Africa.

To that end, the imperial German government embarked on an aggressive process of expropriation of land from the indigenous people of Namibia. The traditional leaders of Nama, OvaHerero and OvaMbanderu heroically resisted the intended expropriation of their land which resulted in direct confrontation with the German Imperial forces. These attempts of expropriating land and livestock started instantly upon the arrival of the Germans during the late 1800s. As result, conflicts erupted between the indigenous communities and the infiltrators and a number of battles were fought prior to the declaration of the Extermination Orders of General Adrian Dietrich Lothar von Trotha. Due to the superiority and sophisticated German warfare, the indigenous communities lost most of these battles and were driven off their land and their livestock were confiscated without compensation.

In order to effectively achieve the objective of land expropriation, the German Imperial Government through their General Von Trotha issued two extermination orders. One order was given at Ozombu Zo Vindimba on 02 October 1904 against the OvaHerero people. The second order was given against the Nama people at Gibeon on 23 April 1905. These two edicts in essence said that all OvaHerero/OvaMbanderu and Nama people within the German colonial borders,

with or without a gun, women or children, with cattle or without cattle, should be wiped out and banished from their motherland and driven into exile. This is how many Nama, OvaHerero and OvaMbanderu are finding themselves in countries such as Botswana, South Africa and elsewhere in the diaspora.

3. Motion of the National Assembly

Based on the above orders of extermination, the late Hon. Dr. Kuaima Riruako (MP) tabled a motion in the Namibian National Assembly pertaining to the Genocide committed by the German Government which was eventually adopted on 26 October 2006. This motion highlighted the following;

- 3.1. That what happened to our people during 1904 to 1908 as a result of General Von Trotha's Extermination Order was a brutal act of genocide sanctioned by the German Government of the day;
- 3.2. That our people are entitled to demand the payment of reparations from the German Government;
- 3.3. That dialogue be convened **between, on the one hand, the German Government and on the other hand, the Namibian Government and representatives of the affected parties** to try and resolve this matter amicably and thereby strengthening and solidifying the existing excellent relationship between the two countries – (Namibian and German).

The motion is explicit that the descendants of the victims of genocide should be and must be part and parcel of the negotiations together with the Namibian government on the one hand and the German government on the other hand. Thus, we the members of the ONCD 1904-1908 are the representatives of the descendants of the victims of genocide as prescribed by this motion.

4. Implementation of the National Assembly Motion

To operationalize the National Assembly's motion, the two governments engaged in diplomatic exchange which resulted in the German government agreeing for a bilateral negotiation process on GAR. Therefore, the German Government appointed Dr. Ruprecht Polenz as their Special Envoy and the State President H.E.

Dr. Hage Geingob appointed Dr. Zed Ngavirue as the Special Envoy for Namibia. Subsequently, the Namibian Government established the following structures to facilitate the negotiation process:

- 4.1. **Special Political Cabinet Committee (SPCC) on GAR to advise the President** – *this committee is chaired by the Vice President and liaise with the Chiefs Forum and the President on Genocide matters;*
- 4.2. **Chiefs' Forum** – Consisting of *various Traditional Authorities amongst others, Vaalgras TA, OtjiKaoko TA, Zeraeua RTA, OvaMbanderu TA, Maharero RTA, !Aman TA, Vita Thom TA, Kambazembi RTA, Okakarara TA, Otjombinde TA, Ondanga TA, Kasaona TA, Goliath TA, Aminius TA, Ombuku TA, Kakurukouje TA, Mureti TA, Gam Traditional Community (TC), Oromuve Tjimba TA, Tjiurunga TA and Ongava TA.*
- 4.3. **Technical Committee of the Special Cabinet Political Committee on GAR** – the targeted/affected communities are represented by a number of people from various communities as well as technical experts representing key institutions but who also come from the affected communities backgrounds;
- 4.4. **Sub-Committees on Legal, Economic and Research & Documentation** – members were selected from the Technical Committee based on their expertise and influence;
- 4.5. **Negotiating Team** – is led by the Special Envoy and include five (5) representatives of the targeted/affected communities.
- 4.6. **Diaspora Community** – includes descendants of the victims of genocide living in the Republic of Botswana and the Republic of South Africa.

5. Status of Negotiations.

To date, we have covered eight (8) rounds of negotiations that took place in reciprocal manner whereby meetings were held in Namibia (Windhoek and Swakopmund) and Germany (Berlin) respectively. The agenda items are mainly the

following three cardinal issues of the 1904-1908 Genocide, which require the parties on the negotiating table to reach a common narrative:

- 5.1. Acknowledgement of Genocide by the German Government ;
- 5.2. Apology that will be acceptable to the descendants of the victims of the Genocide and the Namibian State, and,
- 5.3. Reparation (Reconciliation and Reconstruction)

The two Negotiating Teams, in principle, have reached a common narrative on the issues of Genocide Acknowledgement and Apology, whereby the German counterparts accepted that genocide was committed during 1904-1908 albeit with qualification arguing that these horrible acts were committed before the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1948. The parties agreed **NOT** to engage in legal arguments on this matter since the process was a negotiated process, but not a legal process. What should be noted is the fact that Germany declared that they agreed to negotiate **NOT** because of any force in one way or the other, but did so out of its moral, historical and political considerations. Therefore, the negotiations are premised on moral, historic and political grounds and NOT on legal engagements. Therefore, any references to legal national/international instruments do not form part of the ongoing negotiations.

Consequently, Germany has in principle agreed to tender an apology, the content of which should and must be acceptable by the descendants of victims of genocide and the Namibian State. In this context, we are requesting our government to speedily gazette the Genocide Remembrance Day of May 29 as the day on which Germany should tender the envisaged apology.

Moreover, the targeted communities were asked to indicate their preference as to where and how they would like to receive the apology from Germany. The general consensus reached in the end was an **‘Enlarged Parliamentary Session’** where

traditional leaders of the targeted communities would be invited to for the official deliverance of the official apology by the German President or the Chancellor.

The issue of **'Reparation'** is the final item on the agenda of the ongoing negotiations, which reflects *"the elephant in the room"*, due to its complexity to determine an agreeable formula and by default the acceptable financial amount which will effectively fund the socio-economic development of the descendants of the victims of Genocide in the seven (7) regions as proposed by the Germans during the 7th round of negotiations in Germany namely; Erongo, Hardap, //Karas, Khomas, Kunene, Omaheke and Otjozondjupa.

A draft text agreed upon in principle encompassing genocide acknowledgement and apology is in place and awaits the remaining issue on the Reparation (Reconciliation and Reconstruction) to be agreed upon before we can conclusively declare that an agreement is reached with the German government. What should be underlined is the **"PRINCIPLE AGREEMENT"** that ***"nothing is agreed unless everything is agreed to"***. Based on this principle, let it be known that at **NO** point during the last eight (8) rounds of negotiations was an amount of **€10m** offered by Germany and accepted by the Namibian team. Yes, there was tactically an indicative amount suggested while discussing developmental projects, which was far more than the latter amount, but it was not an offer. The ONCD 1904-1908 is not and will never be that desperate to accept meagre offers made to us that are not commensurate to the losses our ancestors suffered of which the effects are still felt in our daily socio-economic lives.

The ONCD 1904-1908 in collaboration with the GRN Technical Committee on GAR on a regular basis carries out Community Outreach consultations throughout the seven (7) designated regions for the purposes of providing feedback on the ongoing negotiations as well as to assess the socio-economic developmental needs of the targeted communities. The first assessment outreach was conducted during July 25 – August 12, 2017 and the second assessment that also validated the initial exercise

took place during March 04 – 27, 2019 again throughout the seven (7) identified regions. These consultative meetings were highly successful despite attempts from disgruntled elements within the society who tried desperately to keep people away from these consultations. In some instances, threats were issued towards members of the ONCD 1904-1908 TC who had to enlist the assistance and presence of the Namibian Police for their own safety. As a result, the programs/projects that is to be submitted for funding by the Germans were identified and prioritized by the beneficiary communities and not thumb sucked by anyone else.

6. Reparation Implementation Vehicle

As per the narrative during the negotiations, the implementation of the Reparation (Reconciliation and Reconstruction) will be implemented through an independent vehicle which will be administered by the descendants of the genocide whereby the two governments will only have oversight role to play in this exercise.

7. Next Round of Negotiations

The ninth round of negotiations which will mainly deal with the issue of Reparation will focus more on the socio-economic developmental needs of the targeted communities as identified during the numerous outreach meetings conducted by our Negotiating Team Members in the seven identified regions, covering the following sectors:

- Land Acquisition and Reform;
- Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods;
- Infrastructure Development (electrification, water, roads housing, etc.)
- Education and Skills Development;
- Health and Social Welfare;
- Reconciliation Programs (museums, memorial sites, documentation of history, cultural artefacts, etc.)
- Private Sector Investment Programs (value addition), and
- Information and Communication Technology.

The draft proposal document that was recently work-shopped at Otjiwarongo about three (3) weeks ago will form the basis for the next round of negotiations, which was enriched by technical experts from the Private Sector, Parastatals and Government Ministries. I should stress that the representatives of the targeted communities played a crucial role in the organization of the workshop; the identification and invitation of expert resource persons and the development of the final document.

Furthermore, the discussions would also center on finalizing the operational modalities for the Reparation Implementation Vehicle.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, allow me to officially welcome Chief Johannes Fredericks from the !Aman Traditional Authority in Bethanie to the ONCD 1904-1908 family. Chief Fredericks succeeded the late Chief David Fredericks from Bethanie and they resolved to join the ongoing negotiations with the Namibian government and other descendants of the genocide victims as the most viable and appropriate option. There are other traditional authorities and associations which have applied and considered to join the ONCD 1904-1908 and be part of the ongoing negotiation process. This will be announced in due course.

I call upon the descendants of the victims of genocide to remain focused and allow for the ongoing negotiations to conclude successfully. It is no surprise that everyone is talking about the ongoing negotiations as the viable solution to the issue of genocide, which will improve the livelihoods of our people and open a new chapter of mutual coexistence and close the dark chapter towards true reconciliation.

It is however regrettable that the issue of genocide has become a **hot political agenda item** for the upcoming regional and local authority election campaign by political parties, as well as a possible means for survival to some political parties that are losing support amongst the Namibian electorate. In this regard, we would like to appeal to all political parties to stick to the patriotic principle they have demonstrated when they collectively adopted the motion on genocide in the National Assembly during 2006.

Finally, it should be noted that it is not appropriate for someone to claim that genocide was committed only against his/her ancestors and not to the ancestors of the other descendants of the victims of genocide. Thus, genocide was committed to all the targeted communities in Namibia. Therefore, the descendants of the victims of genocide both in Namibia and in the Diaspora should benefit from the reparation (reconciliation and reconstruction programs). It is not an inheritance of an individual where entitlement can be claimed on the basis of association or affiliation.

I thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ueriuka F. Tjikuua', written over a horizontal line.

**SECRETARY: UERIUKA F. TJIKUUA
ON BEHALF OF ONCD 1904-1908**