



A Joint Media Statement by the Ovaherero Genocide Committee and the Nama Genocide Technical Committee: Reaction to the rejection by the German Parliament, the Bundestag, of the Motion by the Left Party.

**Venue:** Ovaherero Commando

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Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media

Our two Technical Committees have invited you to this media briefing to voice our joint reaction to the recent rejection by the German Parliament of the Motion by the Left Party.

As you will probably be well aware, the Left Party's Motion sought from the German Parliament to acknowledge that the atrocities committed in the 1904 – 1908 war against the Ovaherero and the Nama people of this country was indeed genocide. The Motion also further sought an Apology from the German Parliament for the atrocities; and to enter into a (trialogue) in which the descendants of the affected communities form a central and integral part with the both the Namibian and German governments as among the other key players in the trialogue.

Our two Technical Committees have endorsed the Left Party's Motion 100%.

The German Parliament has rejected that motion in toto, that is, 100%.

By rejecting this Motion, the German Parliament has effectively put an official stamp of endorsing the Extermination Orders of 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1904 for the Ovaherero and the one of 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1905 for the Nama and all the concomitant atrocities that characterised those orders. It endorsed the blatant racism that was the centre piece and indeed the driving motive behind the atrocities in question.

For the German Parliament to have rejected this Motion, which actually sought restorative justice for almost the same crimes as those committed against the Jewish people by Adolf Hitler, and for which the same Federal Government of Germany compensated descendants of the Jewish victims, in cash and in kind to the tune of billions, is simply an act of racism. This is because Jews are white and we are non – white, it is as simple as that.

We are of the view that no amount of rejections and refusals to acknowledge the atrocities committed, will wipe off the face of the earth the Genocide committee against our people, nor erase it from the annals of history.

The truth about the Ovaherero and Nama Genocide, and its consequent impact on the descendants of the victims, an impact that they are feeling to date, is now an open secret for all to know and see, including the Germans in Germany. The more we see more rejections, evasions and an arrogant display of neo-racism, the more embarrassment it will sooner or later cause to German government itself, the entire Federal Republic of Germany as well as well-meaning German citizens.

We shall never rest as long as the German government is continuing to ignore our legitimate demand for restorative justice. We shall mobilise the international community to put pressure to bear on the German government and, foremost, we shall mobilise our local friends in Germany, the German electorate, to vote the present coalition government out of office and install a humane government that has respect for the humanity of the Ovaherero and the Nama. That is to say a government that is acknowledges the Genocide committed against us, is sensitive to our demand for restorative justice and has the moral conscience and wisdom listen to the voice of the affected descendents of the victims of 1904 – 1908.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We implore the present German Chancellor and the new German President to both echo the words of the first German Chancellor after the Second World War, Dr Konrad Adenauer, who said on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1951 the following:

“In our name, unspeakable crimes have been committed and demand compensation and restitution, both moral and material for persons and properties of the Jews who have been seriously harmed.”

We say exactly the same and demand that in the German name, unspeakable crimes have been committed and demand compensation and restitution both moral and material for the descendants of the Ovaherero and Nama whose forebears have lost their lives and properties and have been so seriously harmed.

Compensation to the Jews for the Holocaust against them will not be the first that Germany has to pay. In June 1904 a preliminary compensation commission consisting of Attorney Erhard, O. Erhard, M. Kirsten, Carl Schlettwein and Albert Voights travelled to Berlin to obtain compensation for damages suffered by German farmers during the war. The Imperial parliament (The Reichstag) approved two (2) million Deutsche Mark, and later another five (5) million Deutsche Mark.

Ladies and Gentlemen

If German settlers, who may have acquired their farms from the land previously owned by the Ovaherero and Nama, and for which they had paid nothing, could go from here to Germany and demand compensation and get it, why should the Namas and Ovaherero not be treated the same? That should explain why we say racism was the driving motive of the war and now it is rearing its ugly head in the rejection of this Motion.

We want to take this opportunity to equally express our appreciation and gratitude for the tireless efforts and the demonstrated active support for the Left Party’s Motion by the various NGOs. We share their views as expressed so well in their two documents: “Genocide

cannot be subject to prescription!” and the “Background to the resolution”.

The Joint Motion of the Social Democrats and the Green Party pleading for acknowledgement of the Ovaherero and Nama genocide, an official apology and a dialogue among the two countries and the affected communities by stressing the Special Initiative while avoiding restorative justice or reparation that we demand for all that we have lost, is a travesty of our legitimate demand and is nothing more than face-saving public relations exercise by the ruling coalition of the government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Although we welcome their Motion in part, we still do not understand the logic of agreeing to genocide and excluding reparation.

Now that the whole world seems to have awoken to our call for the acknowledgement of the Genocide against our forebearers, with dire consequences against us as descendants of the victims, we wish to appeal to all well-meaning citizens of the World in all streets of the World capitals, to join those who demonstrated in front of the German parliament and to cause the German government sustained embarrassment.

We are also heartened by the Right Honourable Prime Minister, Nahas Angula, for his bold stand and public pronouncement on the issue of Genocide and Reparation against the Ovaherero and the Nama as a result of the 1904 – 1908 war of resistance, and for his position on the now much-discredited “Special Initiative”.

The proponents of the “Special Initiative” cannot expect the Ovaherero and Nama to believe that if you buy old goats, old cattle, a few donkeys and chickens and give these to the people you have paid them the reparation that they demand. The Special Initiative is no substitute to Reparation. The German government can even inflate it ten times, but it can, it is still and shall never be Reparation. Nor can

the German government hope to silence the affected communities with material gimmicks such as the Special Initiative.

Our government must also realise that Chief Riruako's Motion in our own parliament, which was unanimously adopted by all the parties in 2006, has acknowledged the atrocities committed against the Namibian people as Genocide, it thus consequently also supports the demand for Reparation.

According to our Minister of Foreign affairs, Hon. Utoni Nujoma, the German Government has not yet responded to acknowledge whether it has received the Motion on Genocide and Reparation adopted by the Namibian National Assembly. However, we, have no illusion and no reason to believe that Germany would respond positively to our Parliament's Motion. Common sense would not allow the same German government, which rejected the Left Party's Motion to accept ours!

Therefore, we implore our Government and Parliament to act consequently to the rejection of the recent Motion by the Bundestag, and consequent to its disturbing silbes to our own Motion, and reassess the so-called "cordial" and "special friendly relations" between Namibia and Germany? In the aftermath of such a humiliating rejection of the Motion, which is no doubt a slap in the face of the Namibian people, and their government, is certainly cannot be business as usual between our two governments.

Finally, let us reiterate our unflinching support for the brave Motion by the Left Party and the inspiring speech of 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 by Mr Niema Movassat made in the German Parliament in support of the Motion.

It was a moving speech and gave us hope that there are people in this world who cared for others. To him, our sincere thanks!

Thank you!

