

NAMA / HERERO GENOCIDE



MEDIA CONFERENCE STATEMENT BY

**HON. IDA HOFFMANN
CHAIRPERSON:
NAMA GENOCIDE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

**RE: GIVING CLARITY ON THE RECENT MEETING OF
THE NAMA GENOCIDE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE AND
THE OVAHERERO GENOCIDE FOUNDATION
DELEGATES WITH THE GERMAN SPECIAL ENVOY MR.
RUPRECHT POLENZ, AND THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR
CHRISTIAN SCHLAGA.**

Members of the Press
Fellow genocide justice activists
Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome to this unique and unusual press conference on the current events on the Genocide justice front.

We have got an incident of a diplomatic kind at hand, as we speak. This unfortunate incident is no doubt receiving top priority at every office dealing with international issues here in Namibia, the German Embassy, the German community in Namibia, and certainly in Germany and several other government offices around the world.

I would like to put the record straight that ill-fated meeting was prompted by repeated attempts of Mr Rubrecht Polenz to have an audience with me and my delegation. The invitation letter received from the German Embassy signed by the Ambassador gives ample proof that they requested meeting and NOT us.

But before I venture into the issue itself and the details of its content, let me first bring you onboard. The incident which took place in the German Embassy has prompted a lot of outrage and this Press Conference. On the invitation by the German Special Envoy Ruprecht Polenz, together with my delegation of fifteen Nama and Herero representatives, I held a meeting at the German Embassy in the presence of the German Ambassador, Mr. Schlaga.

The meeting was scheduled to deal with issues of mutual interest in the field of the painful past of the German destruction and disowning of Namibians of their possessions, land, property and other values such as cultures, traditions, and heritage, the incidence of Genocide. As Mr. Ruprecht Polenz is charged with representing the German government and its people to together deal with the painful past in which the Germans made themselves guilty of massacres, rapes, land appropriation, stealing dead bodies of the Nama and the Herero people and transporting them to Germany for racial studies, tortures, exterminating the Nama and Herero people with impunity.

During these sensitive discussions, on the statement that Germany having massacred the Jewish people, and has done reparations to the unfortunate Jewish victims by the Nazi regime, Mr. Ruprecht Polenz, with arrogance and insensitivity unbecoming a diplomat and an Special Envoy entrusted with doing justice to that painful past of German destruction of the Nama and the Herero, admonished the delegates, telling us not to compare the destruction of the Nama and the Herero with the massacre of Jewish people. He continued saying that the Jewish suffered more than the Nama and the Herero.

It was at that point of insensitivity and arrogance that the German Special Envoy was requested to make himself clear for putting the suffering of one group above the other.

In our view and knowledge, death, suffering and destruction in one place and against one group is just as painful and destructive as the suffering of the next group. We fail to comprehend how a diplomat of the statute of Mr. Ruprecht Polenz can bring such distasteful pronouncements to such a sensitive issue?

Rejecting his insults, my delegation in unison decided to leave the meeting and the German Embassy premises immediately, in order to prevent further insults and skirmishes. The German Ambassador Christian Schlaga prevented us from leaving the Embassy premises, invoking the so called Embassy rules. Standing on his diplomatic immunity no doubt, and in my view abusing this power. We insisted to leave and to get out of harm's way; and from where the two German diplomats are going to use their diplomatic protection against us. We could not let that happen to us to be treated like that in an Embassy and be caught off guard.

We have been insulted by the German Special Envoy, Ruprecht Polenz who told us that the Holocaust cannot be compared with the 1904 – 1908 Nama and OvaHerero Genocide because the killing of the Jews as more extreme. According to Polenz, the Holocaust was global. Our question is does it mean that killing a Nama and OvaHerero is nothing compared to killing a Jew? This again comes to black lives does not matter.

Let it be on record that we have got the greatest sympathy with what happened to our Jewish brothers and sisters.

We are convinced Mr. Polenz's utterances are a sign of blatant racism. We further believe that both the German government and the Namibian government are not genuine. This is especially true about the German government. The International community needs to be aware that the German government is reluctant to take care of its historical responsibilities in Namibia.

The core of the incident was that Mr. Ruprecht Polenz was insensitive, arrogant, and downright insulting. To add salt to insult, his colleague Ambassador Schlaga, at no point did he attempt to rectify the situation that went out of hand as a result of the comments made by Mr Polenz. The Ambassador's ONLY and I repeat ONLY concern was our movement to exit the Embassy without his approval.

With that background, and in order to keep the Genocide justice issue on track and to drive it toward its logical result of complete restitution, it is only correct to clear the way forward.

It is our well-considered believe that the two German representatives must first and for all be called to order. Secondly both must be required to field each an apology for their unbecoming, disrespectful behavior toward the delegation.

Most importantly the German government must recall both of them. We have lost trust in both. As the structure stands now, we are to deal with them. But with this bad experience with the two of them as designated negotiators and representatives of the Genocide justice issue, they have done away with the trust and honesty so important in these sensitive negotiations. They have broken that most important of elements so necessary in reaching the objectives of justice. Ambassador Schlaga and the German Special Envoy Mr. Ruprecht Polenz cannot any longer be trusted to do justice to the issue of Genocide justice.

Germany has put them in this position of trust, and they have shattered that trust. Germany may still retain that trust in them after this undiplomatic incident. But we are now put in a position where we have lost trust in them. Any further negotiations on the Genocide justice issue will be compromised by this behavior which was prompted by their respective characters and attitudes.

Ladies and Gentlemen; there is no further trust, and expectation of goodwill to carry us further, with these two representatives.

We underpin our primary demands

- 1) **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**
- 2) **THE ACT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT WITH A GENUINE APOLOGY FOR THE CRIME OF GENOCIDE**
- 3) **REPATRIATION**
- 4) **REPARATIONS**
- 5) **RECONCILIATION,**
- 6) **AND THE ROUNDTABLE**

THE PRIMARY PARTICIPANTS of this roundtable must be the Namibian government with its explicit role of mediating and stirring and convening the roundtable, the representatives of the descendants of the victims, who are indeed also victims themselves. And certainly, the Federal Government of Germany, as the stakeholder which is called upon to redress the wrongs, the damages, and the destruction.

THIS IS A HOLY CASE.

THIS IS A SACRED CASE

THIS IS A NOBLE CASE

LET'S HANDLE IT WITH DIGNITY.

And remember, *“Anything about us, without us, is against us”*. But the Germans and the Namibian governments have been dealing with this case all along without us the descendants of the victims of the German genocide of 1904 - 1908.

Therefore members of the press, the Press Release issued by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany is a blatant lie of what transpired at that meeting.

Genocide justice activists

Ladies and Gentlemen

I THANK YOU.