

Language Service
German Bundestag

- Translation -

Translation of letter sent by: Dr Markus Ederer, State Secretary at the Federal Foreign Office

To: Mr Niema Movassat, Member of the German Bundestag

Dated: 8 May 2015

Written questions for the month of April 2015

Question no. 4-260

Dear Mr Movassat,

Regarding your question:

To what extent does the Federal Government intend to react to the motion tabled by the Coalition, deliberated on at the German Bundestag on 24 April 2015 (Bundestag printed paper 18/4684) – describing the “systematic expulsion and extermination of over one million ethnic Armenians” in 1915 as “exemplifying the history of mass annihilations, ethnic cleansing, deportations, yes of genocides” – as well as to its own clear statement that the Shoa should be considered genocide (cf. Federal Government answer of 19 April 2012 to my written question, Bundestag printed paper 17/9352), by also now classifying as genocide the atrocities and massacres systematically carried out by the German Empire against the Herero and Nama in the former German colony of South-West Africa, today Namibia, with the declared intent of extermination, and by apologising on behalf of the Germans for these crimes against humanity? And, if the Federal Government does not intend to classify these deeds as genocide, how does it justify the differences in classification between the Shoa carried out by the German Nazi regime, the atrocities committed by the Young Turk regime against the Armenians and the atrocities committed by the German Empire against the Herero and Nama – all of which are classified by the majority of experts in the field as genocides (cf. <http://genocide-namibia.net/wissenschaftliche-literatur>) and all of which were cited by the authors of the UN Genocide Convention as examples in calling for the Convention’s adoption?

my answer is as follows:

The Federal Government continues to explicitly accept, including against the background of the dreadful colonial war waged by the German Empire in German South-West Africa

between 1904 and 1908, the special historical responsibility which Germany has towards Namibia and all of its citizens.

The Federal Foreign Minister, Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, began addressing this issue in the early stages of his second term in office: in a detailed discussion on 2 June 2014 in Berlin, Federal Foreign Minister Steinmeier and his Namibian counterpart Nandi-Ndaitwah, agreed on and launched a process of political dialogue.

In this way, both ministers wish to work together to help gradually overcome the aftereffects of the colonial era, which are still felt today. The goal of this German-Namibian dialogue is to together find a fitting culture of commemoration and remembrance of the atrocities committed during that period and to move forward bilateral relations on the foundations of the shared history.

The talks explicitly include the search for an appropriate shared narrative regarding the terrible events of the past. Only through cooperation can the past truly be addressed and reconciliation achieved. Naturally, this process is influenced by the nature of the ongoing debates in Germany and Namibia.

At the request of Minister Steinmeier, the Federal Foreign Office's special representative for African Affairs has already visited Windhoek several times for intensive discussions and deliberations in this context. The discussions underway are very constructive and have made good progress, but they have not yet been concluded.

Yours sincerely,
Sgd. *Ederer* (m.p.)