

## Remarks

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#### Association of the Ovaherero Genocide in the United States

As a co-sponsor of the congress, the Association of the Ovaherero Genocide in the United States of America welcomes you to Berlin. Let me thank the on-site congress organizers Christian Kopp, of the Berlin Postkolonial and Israel Kaunatjike of the NGO Alliance for a job well done.

Allow me to recognize our brothers and sisters from all over the world who are partaking of this important Congress on Restorative Justice for the Ovaherero and the Nama people.

Cognizant of the time limit placed upon me for my introductory remarks, let me get on with it:

- The Extermination Orders of 1904 and 1905 as articulated by Kaiser Wilhelm II's Imperial Germany specifically targeted only the Ovaherero and the Nama people for extermination.
- No other indigenous peoples or groups in the former German Southwest Africa were targeted by the afore-mentioned extermination orders.
- 81% or 65,000 Ovaherero and over 10,000 Nama perished at the hands of Imperial Germany's schutztruppe.
- Many Ovaherero and the Nama people were used as slave and/or forced laborers, without compensation and under inhumane and barbaric conditions.
- Ovaherero and Nama girls and women were subjected to routine rape and physical violence with the knowledge and consent of the German colonial authorities.
- The land, cattle and other property of the Ovaherero and the Nama people were taken from them without financial compensation.
- German colonial authorities attempted to eradicate the language and culture of the Ovaherero and the Nama people.
- The Federal Republic of Germany must issue an unambiguous apology through the *de jure* organ of the Deutsche Volk, the

Bundestag for the genocide Germany has committed against the Ovaherero and the Nama people.

- The Ovaherero and the Nama people demand nothing short of restorative justice.
- The Federal Republic of Germany must enter into direct talks with the Ovaherero and the Nama people as represented by Paramount Chief Advocate Vekuii Rukoro and Gaob David Frederick.
- The Federal Republic of Germany must enter into these talks without any preconditions.
- The current on-going talks between the governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Namibia have no legal standing under international law because of the exclusion of Paramount Chief Vekuii Rukoro of the Ovaherero and Gaob David Fredericks of the Nama people.
- Germany should not confuse the development aid it provides Namibia as a form of reparations to the Ovaherero and the Nama people.
- President Geingob was quoted in the Bloomberg news service during his recent visit to the UN and the USA. I quote “Germans will come in a big way” “We are telling them, you are the power here. You killed many of our people. Help us to change that. Now they have agreed. If you could get aid in kind that would help to better your country.”
- From this quotation it appears that Germany has agreed to something that the Ovaherero and Nama people consider it to be a non-starter.
- In my view, one of the main outcomes objectives of the Congress should be that it becomes the catalyst in convincing the German public that Chancellor Merkel’s government is on the wrong side of history with reference to the issue of the Ovaherero and the Nama people genocide and reparations.
- Chancellor Merkel should emulate the leadership role played by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in the 1950s.
- In his address before the German Bundestag, on January 27, 2010, Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel said the following: “On September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1951, from the Bundestag podium, Adenauer spoke about the responsibility of the German people for the crimes of the Third Reich against the Jewish people, and the intention

of his government to devise a compensation agreement for the loss of Jewish property and help in the revival process of Israel”.

- The Ovaherero and the Nama people demand the same kind of leadership from Chancellor Angela Merkel.
- Germany has paid reparations to German farmers in Namibia who claimed to have suffered war damages during Imperial Germany's Extermination war against the Ovaherero and the Nama people.
- In June 1904 Albert Voigts traveled to Germany from Namibia as part of the Preliminary Compensation Commission to seek financial compensation for war damages suffered by the German farmers.
- The Reichstag provided 2 million Deutsche Marks and later on it provided another 5 million Deutsche Marks to the German farmers.
- It is disingenuous for Germany to demand that the government of Turkey recognizes the massacres of the Armenians by the Ottoman Empire in 1915 as genocide. While at the same time the Federal Republic of Germany refuses to take ownership of the genocide that Kaiser Wilhelm II's Imperial Germany has committed against the Ovaherero and the Nama people.

### **What Does Restorative Justice Mean?**

This question begs an explanation, in my view. To restore something, it means that the condition that existed heretofore no longer exists. In this case it means, that apart from the huge loss of life, genocide has clearly robbed the Ovaherero and the Nama people of their previous wealth and standing. In the discourse that has taken place thus far, the question of financial compensation has come up.

### **So, Why Financial Compensation?**

- It is necessary for the German government to compensate the Ovaherero and the Nama people for the land and cattle the Germans stole from them **before**, **during** and **after** the war of genocide.
- The land, cattle and other property of the Ovaherero and the Nama people were taken from them without financial compensation.
- The land and the wealth that were taken away from the Ovaherero are still in the hands of those who confiscated it illegally.

- Today, the Ovaherero people continue to eke out a living on the barren and marginal land, the reservations, where they were placed after their ancestral land was taken by force-of-arms.
- On the contrary, the German settlers today continue to enjoy their ill-gotten wealth in an independent Namibia.
- The genocidal campaign against the Ovaherero and the Nama people totally destroyed the Ovaherero and Nama cultures.
- The Ovaherero and the Nama people, who sought and were given sanctuary in Botswana, South Africa and elsewhere lost their culture and language.
- Culture and language are the *sine qua non* of human survival and interaction.
- Namibia today has the acute income distribution in the world, with the majority of the Ovaherero and Nama people living on less than US\$2/day.
- Genocide has left a deep and permanent psychological trauma on the Ovaherero and Nama psyche.

**Financial Compensation Is Critical For The Following:**

- (a) To buy back the Ovaherero and the Nama lands. The total acreage of the land should be priced at the current market prices.
- (b) To recover lost savings in the form of livestock with compounded interest of over 100 years.
- (c) To recover lost investments in the infrastructure.
- (d) To recover the loss of income to generations of their descendants.
- (e) To recover the unpaid wages of forced slave labor of Ovaherero and Nama people in concentration camps (Document of the Leadership of Association of the Ovaherero Genocide in the United States, 2016).

This is not an exhaustive list by any means. It is an incomplete list that is only intended to kick-start the dialogue between the Ovaherero and the Nama people with Germany.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel with regard to the issue of German reparations for Ovaherero and the Nama people because there is already the Jewish reparations precedent involving Germany in connection with the Jewish Holocaust of World War II.

In this regard, the German government should stop playing games in negotiations and seriously deal with this reparations issue for Ovaherero and the Nama people in the same way that it dealt with the issue of reparations for the Jewish groups in collaboration with the State of Israel and the Jewish leaders of the Claims Conference (Sagi, 1986; Zweig, 1987).

### **The Church Silence**

- As a man of faith, I must say that I am conflicted and very much disappointed by the silence of the church on this debate.
- To the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church – I ask the question. Where is the outrage?
- The church clearly bears witness to the heinous crimes against humanity that were committed by Imperial Germany against the Ovaherero and the Nama people.
- The church was in Namibia doing missionary work and proselytizing during that time when genocide was ruthlessly carried out.
- Your silence on the Ovaherero and Nama *Shoa* is unacceptable and it is a stain on your moral high ground.
- You have the moral responsibility to take the mantle and be front and center in having conversations on the genocide of the Ovaherero and the Nama people with your congregations during your hours of worship.
- The time is now. The time is now to have the courage of being unabashedly the shepherd of your flock in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- Some of us, who are present here today, are the products of your educational institutions in pre-independent Namibia. As a member of the Lutheran Church I attended Lutheran schools in Namibia. For that, I am grateful.
- I am grateful for the bountiful of opportunities I was given. Opportunities that served as the solid foundation for my educational achievement in the United States of America.
- At this point allow me to introduce my former high school teacher at Martin Luther High School in Namibia. A man who have whetted my appetite for learning and encouraged my inquisitiveness. Klaus Pietsch from Hamburg. Klaus, I thank you for joining us at the congress.

Given the time constraints, perhaps I should stop here. However, before I do that. Let me ask you for your indulgence for a minute longer to share with you a handout that was put together by the leadership of the Association of the Ovaherero Genocide in the United States of America for your perusal.

I thank you.