

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
DR HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA ON THE OCCASION OF
RECEIVING HUMAN REMAINS (MORTAL REMAINS)
OF NAMIBIAN ORIGIN REPATRIATED
FROM GERMANY**

5 OCTOBER 2011

**HEROES ACRE
WINDHOEK**

Check Against Delivery

Fellow Namibians,
Your Excellency, Dr. Sam Nujoma, Founding President and Father of the
Namibian Nation,
Right Honourable Prime Minister,
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
Honourable Chairperson of the National Council,
Your Honour, the Chief Justice,
Honourable Ministers,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Honourable Governors,
Your Excellency, Mr. Egon Kochanke, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of
Germany to Namibia,
Honourable Regional and Local Authority Councillors,
Esteemed Traditional and Community Leaders,
Your Worship, the Mayors of different Towns,
Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here today at a solemn occasion. It is an occasion that reminds us of the long journey that, we, the Namibian people have walked to the dawn of freedom and independence. This journey, and indeed the historical landscape of our nation are marked by many epoch-making milestones.

Among the most significant, is the anti-colonial War of Resistance which took place from 1904 to 1908. During that war, an unprecedented order was issued by the Military Commander of the German Imperial Troops, Lothar von Trotha, for the extermination of the Herero people.

Although the Extermination Order was directed at the Herero people, the German Imperial Troops committed horrendous atrocities against other Namibians, such as the Mbanderus and the Namas. They killed thousands of our people. They plundered our land in their quest to subjugate our people. They did not spare anyone. Not even the women and the children. In his own words, von Trotha said “*every Herero within the borders of the German Suid-west Africa, with or without a gun; with or without cattle, will be shot*”. Other communities that resisted German colonial occupation of our motherland faced the same fate.

Fellow Namibians,

The German Imperial Army was not contented only to have wiped out a large section of our people. They also severed the heads of some of the victims, including small children and sent them off to Germany for experimentation. This was a brutal violation of common decency and an affront to our values as Africans. In 1995, plans started to repatriate the mortal remains of Namibians who died during the war of 1904 to 1908, back to our Motherland. Following interactions between Namibian and German authorities, a Namibian delegation left for Germany on 25 September 2011 to participate in the handover ceremony of the mortal remains from German Authorities to the representatives of the Namibian Government and Traditional Authorities.

The delegation was also charged with the task of bringing the remains back to Namibia. These men and women completed their task successfully, hence our gathering here today to receive the first consignment of the mortal remains to be repatriated from Germany. Those that remain in Germany will be repatriated in the near future.

Fellow Namibians,

This is a momentous day in the history of our nation. It is a day that should remind all of us about the difficulties that our people have endured in their march towards nationhood.

It should remind us, not only of their suffering, but also their bravery and gallantry in the face of immense difficulties.

It is our duty to ensure, as far as possible, that the remains of all Namibians who lost their lives during the war of colonial resistance and the modern liberation struggle are repatriated to their Motherland. I have no doubt that the souls of the war victims who were violated by the German Imperial Forces in such a callous manner and the spirits of our forefathers and mothers rejoice today because we have reunited these mortal remains with the land of their birth.

The return of these remains gives us an opportunity to pay deserving tribute to the heroic deeds of our fore-bearers. These are the heroes and heroines who made history for our nation. They carried the spirit of freedom and independence.

It is for this reason that we pay tribute to our forebearers such as Hendrick Witbooi, Samuel Maherero, Nicodemus Kahimemua, Jakob Marengo, Nehale IyaMpingana, Madume yaNdemufayo, Iipumbu yaTshilongo and many other heroes and heroines of the early struggle against colonial oppression. Through their unselfish sacrifices, our ancestors laid a strong foundation for the modern liberation struggle, which led to the attainment of our freedom and independence in 1990.

In order to honour their enduring legacy, we should continue to promote National Reconciliation and to build our country as “*One Namibia, One Nation*”. We must continue to maintain peace and stability in our country and reject the vices of tribalism, ethnicity, racism, regionalism and sexism. We must work hard to build a prosperous nation where all Namibians can enjoy the fruits of independence.

I call upon Namibian and German researchers to identify items of Namibian origin that are still in Germany, and which hold historical and cultural significance so that they can be returned to Namibia. We will continue to work with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany to strengthen the ties of bilateral cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and mutual benefit of our two peoples. We also trust that our two countries will continue working together to complete the repatriation of the remains that are still in Germany.

With open hearts, we welcome the mortal remains of our people who lost their lives during the anti-colonial war of resistance. It is for this reason that we are honouring the fallen heroes and heroines in this way here at Heroes Acre today. It is for the same reason that the remains will be interned in the Independence Memorial Museum to preserve our history for posterity and to remind future generations about the cruelty of war.

We are proud that although they were brutally killed, their spirit was never broken. We are also consoled that while the mortal remains were removed from the country amidst the ruins of war, they have returned to an independent, peaceful, and stable Namibia. This is what they died for. And now they can rest.

To their gallantry and bravery, we offer our honour and respect. Their blood waters our freedom.

May their souls rest in eternal peace.

I thank you.