

# REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**RESPONSE BY HON. FRANS KAPOFI, MP, MINISTER  
OF PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS, TO A QUESTION POSED  
BY HON. ELMA J. DIENDA.**

**18 JUNE 2015**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,  
WINDHOEK**

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Members,

I rise to respond to a question that was posed by Honourble Dienda. For the record, I wish to restate the question posed by Hon. Dienda as provided to me in writing. The question was framed as follows: I quote,

*“It is common knowledge that the Council of Churches (CCN) and the churches in Namibia were seen as the Ecumenical arm of SWAPO and many of the staff of CCN ended up as Members of Parliament, while others have become CEOs and high ranking officials of parastatals. Church leaders at the time, played a very important role during the liberation struggle. They gave food, shelter and some of them were even jailed because of their involvement. In view of this, can the Hon. Minister of Presidential Affairs please inform this August House why the majority of them are not being recognized as veterans or being given veteran status.”* End of quote.

Honourable Speaker,

The Honourable Members will recall, that when His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob reorganized the Executive Branch after taking office, he place the veterans affairs issues within the Presidency.

Honourable Speaker,

It is an incontrovertible historical fact that our national liberation struggle was waged by Namibians from all walks of life and sections of the population, at home and abroad. The struggle was waged on multiple fronts: military, diplomatic and political. Namibian clergy, teachers, doctors, nurses, students, young people, subsistence farmers, workers and communities made selfless contributions to this cause. Thousands suffered torture, detention, imprisonment and many others sacrificed their precious lives.

It is also no secret that the Government of independent Namibia has consistently recognized and applauded the invaluable contributions and selfless sacrifices made by Namibians in all parts of the country to break the chains of apartheid colonialism.

These contributions by Namibians, *including those made by members of the clergy and their congregations*, will never be forgotten. I wish to state that these noble contributions should not be categorized. Our people participated in the struggle as patriots. It does not matter whether they acted as individuals or belonged to a particular group or institution.

I wish to thank Honourable Dienda for raising this important national issue. The recognition of veterans and the awarding of veterans' status are regulated by two pieces of legislation. These are: the Veterans Act, 2008, Act No. 2 of 2008 and the Veterans Amendment Act, 2013 (Act No. 3 of 2013).

Honourable Members,

Section 28(1) of the Veterans Act provides that a person who wishes to be registered as a veteran or dependent of a living or deceased veteran of the liberation struggle of Namibia, must apply to the Veterans Board for registration, in the prescribed form and manner.

Furthermore, Section 5(2) of the Veterans Amendment Act, defines a veteran as:

*“(2) ... a person who –*

- (a) was a member of the liberation forces, provided the person was above 18 years of age on 21 March 1990;*
- (b) consistently and persistently participated or engaged in any political, diplomatic or underground activity in furtherance of the liberation struggle up to the date of independence; or*
- (c) owing to his or her participation in the liberation struggle was convicted, whether in Namibia or elsewhere, of any offence closely connected to the struggle and sentenced to imprisonment, provided the person continued with the liberation struggle activities after being released.”*

It is important to point out that the relevant laws do not make provision for categories of persons to be granted veterans status. That is not part of the law.

What the law states is that registration for veteran status is open to any person, and I repeat, any person who consistently and persistently participated during the liberation struggle. The law only makes provision for individual persons to register. It does not provide for institutional or group registration. Thus, it is not possible to all church leaders, as suggested by Honourable Dienda, or any other group of persons, to be granted veteran status as a group. Those who qualify have to register as individual persons according to the guidelines laid down in the laws. Laws, which were passed by our Parliament.

In terms of Section 28 of the Veterans Act, 2008 a written response is given to each applicant for veterans' status, stating whether the application has been approved or declined. Where an application is declined, the applicant is informed of the process of appeal against the decision of the Veterans Board. Such applicants may appeal to the Appeal Board.

I wish to inform the House that the process of applying for registration of veteran status commenced in 2008. To ensure full coverage and access, the process has been conducted at Constituency level in all Regions of the country. The process is continuing. It was never declared as concluded. This is a deliberate decision of Government to ensure that all Namibians who qualify get a chance to register.

Honourable Speaker,

To date, twenty nine thousand, three hundred and three (29,303) persons have been granted veterans' status. These persons represent a cross section of our society, including former PLAN combatants; teachers; communal farmers; students; the youth; workers; doctors; nurses and yes, church leaders, to mention a few. As I speak, a further *eighteen thousand (18,000)* applications have been vetted by the National Vetting Committee, and will be considered by the Veterans Board as provided in the Act.

Lastly, I would like to request those persons who participated consistently and persistently in the national liberation struggle and have not yet applied, to do so. I would also like to commend those veterans who have applied, for their patience, while their applications are being considered.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Members,

During the process of registration and vetting quite a large number of fake freedom fighters have been detected and as such their applications rejected forthwith. It is very clear that some people want to be part of this historical chapter not for the purpose it was created for, but for material gain. Why does someone wants to be what he or she is not?

Once again, I wish to express my appreciation to Hon. Dienda for raising this important matter, which is so dear to the hearts of all our people. Our government is fully committed to assisting and attending to the welfare of all veterans of our national liberation struggle. They stood firm, in the face of danger so that Namibia can be free.

I thank you.

