

THE BRUTALITY OF THE NAMA/ HERERO GENOCIDE

By Hon Paula Kooper

Wednesday, 22 September 2021

Hon Speaker,

Hon Members

Members of the Public

I rise to add my voice to this important and necessary debate. A debate that places a pertinent historic responsibility and obligation to make good on the State of Germany. This issue affects the affected communities but also Namibia as a collective, in a manner that is deeply painful. ^{Late Dr} Chief Kuaima Rikuako must be credited for playing an important and catalytic role in bringing that initial historic motion when he did in 2006.

I also pause to acknowledge and applaud the 2006 NA as a collective for unanimously passing a motion on the 1904-1908 genocide. But I also pay special tribute to our fallen Chiefs that took part in that historic journey, Ombara Otjitambi Advocate Vekuii Rukoro, Gaob Edward Afrikaner, Ombara Hon Kilus Nguvauva, Gaob Dawid Fredericks,

Gaob Seth Kooitjie, Hoofman (Gaob) Joel Stephanus, Chief Kasauna and all traditional leaders, Hon Rev Willem Konjore, Amb^{br} Zed Ngavirue, Hon Kazenambo Kazenambo and all other fallen heroes.

I also take this opportunity the self- sacrifices of Hon Ida Hofmann and Hon^{br} Ester Muinjangué and all formidable men and women who^{gion} championed this issue before us. The baton is now with us. As traditional leaders, and the Namibian nation, we must now take this forward in a manner that unify us. Let us not lose this opportunity to speak candidly and with foresight.

^{RtM}
I will be remiss if I don't acknowledge the role of the SWAPO led GRN and the able leadership of the President of the Republic, Dr Hage G Geingob for his role and stewardship up to this point.

Hon Speaker,

Hon Members,

I must acknowledge that prior to the genocidal war of 1904-1908, there were wars of resistance waged by the OvaMbanderu, OvaHerero and Nama people against German colonial occupation. In line with the principle of effective occupation adopted by the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, European settlers including the German Imperial government needed to have large tracks of land in order to expand their colonial oppressive activities in Africa.

The imperial German government embarked on an aggressive process of expropriation of land from the indigenous people of Namibia. The traditional leaders of Nama, OvaHerero and OvaMbanderu heroically resisted the intended expropriation of their land which resulted in direct confrontation with the German Imperial forces. These attempts of expropriating land and livestock started instantly upon the arrival of the Germans during the late 1800s.

In order to effectively achieve the objective of land expropriation, the German Imperial Government through their General Von Trotha issued two extermination orders. One order was given at Ozombu Zo Vindimba on 02 October 1904 against the OvaHerero people. The second order was given against the Nama people at Gibeon on 23 April 1905. These two edicts in essence said that all OvaHerero/OvaMbanderu and Nama people within the German colonial borders, with or without a gun, women or children, with cattle or without cattle, should be wiped out and banished from their motherland and driven into exile. This is how many Nama, OvaHerero and OvaMbanderu are finding themselves in countries such as Botswana, South Africa and elsewhere in the diaspora.

This has not been an easy journey particularly for the affected communities. The impact of that genocide of over 117 years ago is still visible in the lives of our people. The community from which I hail, is in no palatable situation. The trauma and helplessness is affecting the

youth in a manner that they feel destitute. They need Hope. They need something to look forward to and for some, how this genocide issue spans out may be the one chance they have to restore a sense of dignity.

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Members allow me to give you a short synopsis of who I am and why I am affected by this Genocide.

I am a great grandchild of Gaob Noag Tsai-tsaib both ^{on} maternal and ~~paternal~~ ^{bloodlines side} who happened to be the chief of the Kaillkhaun in !hoaxa!nas during 1937 and 1948. Tsita ge a Xamlnu tare khoe.

In 1902 during the reign of Gaob Manasse !Noreseb the imperial Germany confirmed Hoachanas as the home area of the red nation the kaillkhaun llaes and created a reserve of 50 000 hectares. When the Herero and Nama war broke out in which the Germans attacked indigenous Herero and Nama in their colonial territory, Gaob Manasse !Noreseb and GAOB Hendrik Witbooi ceased their hostilities and fought together against Shutztruppe. Gaob Manasse !Noreseb with only 100 armed men, took over the defence of the central Eastern area of Aranos, Leonardville, Aminuis and Hoachanas.

The German Empire Shutztruppe defeated both the nama and Herero during this war. Namas were displaced all over the country, and even deported to German colonies of Togo and Cameroon. The ethnical structures of the nama people were destroyed and Hoachanas lost its importance as a community, all land and life stock was confiscated by the Germans.

I am aware that a lot has been said about how the public consultations we had with our communities and their leaders in the South. For the record, Hon Speaker, we visited Hardap and Ilkharas regions ~~including~~

~~clashes who opted not to see us. We experienced severe insensitivity and hostility from some of our Nama traditional leaders and would not meet with all of them. The intention of that was not to bring us to a meeting, which was a historic moment and did in no sense deny the value system through which we were brought up.~~

It is only fair to say, that following those consultations, communities were able to meet with their leaders and discuss the content of the joint declaration. In all our engagements, we shared what the proposed programmes are intended to achieve and that communities must be in the driving seat of how any money paid as reparations will be used, including deciding on what the funds should be used for and how.

We cannot talk about “nothing about us without us” and not share the information that we are privy to with the communities.

In fact, Hon Speaker, Hon Members,

extermination was 2nd October 1904 and not as appeared in the statement of yesterday as 1st October 1904.
We came to the realization, through these outreach visits, that some of our communities were deprived of information around the genocide by their traditional for long and they expressed their appreciation and invited us to visit them quite often in the same fashion on topical issues.

Communities must at a minimum understand what they are saying yes or no to. Of the many questions communities asked and engaged us were: (1) why we must consider the buying back of land that was taken

from us with the funds that will be paid as reparations, (2) they questioned the absence of affected communities (through their leaders) as direct representatives at the negotiating table, an issue I think has been clarified on many occasions in that, there was never any intent to exclude affected communities.

Truth is, it is universally known that States negotiate with States, Chiefs speak to Chiefs, and so on. The important issue is that the voices, interests and the wants of the affected communities was taken up through the Chiefs forum and various other engagements with the office of the Vice President, but I leave this here, (3) and lastly of course was the adequacy of the quantum. The amount is truly stark compared to what Namibia initially submitted to Germany and does not auger well for recognition of the genocide. It must be reviewed. Although members of the communities also expressed that we do not lose the opportunity to keep this fire burning but it must not be at the expense of dividing our communities and the Namibian nation at large.

Hon Speaker

Hon members,

The advice from our affected communities, was that we have our foot in the door, lets engage on the issue of quantum and improve on the document and not simply throw the baby out with the bathwater ... Its easy for us in these positions to simply say let's reject it without a firm proposal for alternatives or how we can improve on it and still get what we deserve.

For instance, there were some proposals that any implementation vehicle should be separate and outside the GRN national budget, any implementation be transparent where affected communities fully participate and that first priority be given to descendants of affected communities and that traditional communities play a role in the allocation and distribution of funds in pursuit of restoring the dignity of the people.

Hon Speaker,

In conclusion, I ask, for unity, patience and a skillful approach on this issue.

I thank you.

