

Kolonialismus, Reparationen, Normalisierung? Deutsch-namibische Beziehungen

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Hintergrund

Die Beziehungen zwischen den ehemaligen Kolonien in Afrika und Kolonialstaaten sind umkämpft. Frankreich wird in Westafrika mit einer immer stärker werdenden antikolonialen Bewegung konfrontiert. Auch Belgien tut sich im Umgang mit seinem kolonialen Erbe schwer, wie es anlässlich der Rückgabe im Juni 2022 des „Zahns“ von Patrice Eméry Lumumba – des ermordeten ersten Premierministers der DR Kongo – deutlich wurde.

Im Vergleich begann Deutschland etwas früher, mit Namibia offizielle Verhandlungen um Reparationen zu führen. Damit hatte Deutschland die Chance, mit gutem Beispiel im Umgang mit Genozid und kolonialem Erbe voranzugehen. Diese Chance wurde verpasst: Die betroffenen Committees der Ovaherero und Nama erkennen das im Mai 2021 nach jahrelangen Verhandlungen von den Sonderbeauftragten Deutschlands und Namibias paraphierte „Versöhnungsabkommen“ nicht als solches an.

Am 14.10.2022 haben wir dazu eingeladen, mit unseren Gästen aus Namibia die Gründe dieser Ablehnung, wie ein gerechter Umgang mit Massengewalt und Genozid aussehen kann und was dieser für die namibisch-deutschen Beziehungen zu bedeuten hat, zu diskutieren.



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Einführende Worte

Dr. Boniface Mabanza Bambu Koordinator Kirchliche Arbeitsstelle Südliches Afrika (KASA) Heidelberg

Die Konferenz „Afrika neu denken 2022“ fand am 14. Oktober im Haus am Dom in Frankfurt statt. Es war das zweite Mal in der mittlerweile zehnjährigen Geschichte dieser Reihe, dass ein auf dem ersten Blick länderspezifischer Schwerpunkt gesetzt wurde. Das erste Mal war 2019, als die Konferenz das Thema „Komplizierte Beziehungen – Afrika und Europa 25 Jahre nach Ende der politischen Apartheid“ behandelte. Genauso wie es 2019 darum ging, darüber nachzudenken, wie 25 Jahre nach der Abschaffung der politischen Apartheid die südafrikanischen Erfahrungen und Diskurse neue Perspektiven und Fragen für die Europa-Afrika-Beziehungen in Deutschland öffnen können, stand auch im Hintergrund der diesjährigen Konferenz die Frage danach, was afrikanische Länder, bei denen die Aufarbeitung der kolonialen Gräueltaten bevorsteht, von den Dynamiken der Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Namibia lernen können.

Dafür wurden in dieser Konferenz verschiedene Aspekte dieser Beziehungen analysiert. Eine allgemeine Kontextualisierung lieferte Uhuru Dempers, Leiter vom Desk for Social Responsibility der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Namibia (ELCN), indem er eine Bestandsaufnahme der namibischen Gesellschaft machte: Besitzverhältnisse, Einkommensungleichheiten, Zugang zu Arbeit, Bildungsmöglichkeiten ... All diese Aspekte analysierte er vor dem Hintergrund der Tatsache, dass Namibia seit nun 31 Jahren un-abhängig ist, wobei er mehr als deutlich zeigte, wie sowohl deutscher als auch südafrikanischer Kolonialismus nachwirken und all den erwähnten Aspekten im heutigen Namibia ihren Stempel aufdrücken. Er zeichnete das Bild einer Gesellschaft, die nach wie vor aus getrennten Communities besteht, wobei die Privilegien der weißen Minderheit und der kleinen schwarzen „Elite“ mit dem Mangel an Ressourcen und an gesellschaftlicher Teilnahme der großen Mehrheit kontrastieren. Daran ändert seiner Meinung nach nichts, dass sich ein Teil der schwarzen „Elite“ nach der Unabhängigkeit hat kooptieren lassen.

Es ist jener noch sehr kolonial geprägte gesellschaftliche Kontext, den es zu berücksichtigen gilt, um die von Uria Nandiuasora Mazeingo und Evelyn Mswetsa thematisierten Gründe für die Ablehnung des Versöhnungsabkommens zwischen Namibia und Deutschland einordnen zu können. Evelyn Mswetsa vertrat die kurzfristig erkrankte Sima Luipert. Abgesehen vom Verhandlungsprozess, der die direkt vom Genozid betroffenen Gruppen ausgeschlossen hat, wurde bemängelt, dass das Versöhnungsabkommen in seiner jetzigen Form weder einer Anerkennung der Gräueltaten noch einer Entschuldigung, geschweige denn der Reparationsforderung gerecht wird. Beide Referent:innen bezogen sich im Blick auf das Reparationsgebot auf die UN-Grundprinzipien und -Leitlinien über das Recht auf Abhilfe und Wiedergutmachung für Opfer grober Verletzungen der internationalen Menschenrechtsnormen und schwerer Verletzungen des humanitären Völkerrechts. Diese definieren fünf



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Komponenten für Reparationen: Restitution, Entschädigung, Rehabilitierung, Genugtuung und Garantien der Nicht-Wiederholung. Keine dieser Komponenten sehen sie im Versöhnungsabkommen als berücksichtigt.

Heike Becker (University of Western Cape, Südafrika) griff auch den Versöhnungsprozess auf, indem sie unterstrich, dass, wenn ein Abkommen zwischen einer ehemaligen Kolonialmacht und den ehemals Kolonisierten eine Chance haben soll, Gerechtigkeit und Versöhnung zu schaffen, die Nachkommen der Betroffenen genau angehört werden müssen. Dies setzt voraus, dass sie in angemessener Weise in die Verhandlungen einbezogen werden. Dies ist bei den Verhandlungen zwischen Namibia und Deutschland nicht der Fall gewesen, obwohl die Genozidopfergruppen es von Anfang an beharrlich verlangten. Darüber hinaus unterstrich sie auch das, was Uria Nandiuasora Mazeingo und Mokweni Evelyn Mswetsa das selektive Gedächtnis der deutschen Regierung nennen, die mit Genozidopfergruppen aus Namibia anders umgeht als mit anderen Opfergruppen.

Alle Referent:innen waren sich darüber einig, dass es jenseits der offiziellen Verhandlungen vielfältiger zivilgesellschaftlicher Initiativen bedarf, um die namibisch-deutschen Beziehungen heilen zu können.

Die Veröffentlichung dieser Tagungsdokumentation geschieht in einem Kontext, in dem in Namibia Vertreter:innen der Ovaherero und Nama sich seit Mitte Januar an das Oberste Gericht Namibias gewandt haben, um das Versöhnungsabkommen juristisch anzufechten. Die Gemeinsame Erklärung widerspricht ihrer Meinung nach einer Resolution des namibischen Parlaments aus dem Jahr 2006, die die Regierung beauftragte, die Opfergruppen in ihren Verhandlungen mit Deutschland um Wiedergutmachung zu begleiten. Wir wünschen Ihnen eine inspirierende Lektüre.

PROGRAMM

- 16:00 Begrüßung/Einführung**
- 16:10 KURZFILM „Differences“ zum deutschen Kolonialismus in Namibia**
- 16:15 DEUTSCHLAND-NAMIBIA BEZIEHUNGEN HEUTE. EINE EINSCHÄTZUNG**
Heike Becker, University of Western Cape, Südafrika
- 16:30 IM KONFLIKT MIT DEM KOMPROMISS: STIMMEN AUS NAMIBIA ZUM**
„VERSÖHNUNGSABKOMMEN“ ZWISCHEN DEUTSCHLAND UND NAMIBIA
- Mokweni Evelyn Mswetsa, Ovaherero Genocide Foundation, OGF
 - Uria Nandiuasora Mazeingo, Vorsitzender Ovaherero Genocide Foundation
- 17:30 Diskussion**
- 17:45 Pause**
- 18:15 NAMIBIA NACH 32 JAHREN UNABHÄNGIGKEIT. EINE ZIVILGESELL-**
SCHAFTLICHE BESTANDSAUFNAHME
Uhuru Dempers, Desk for Social Responsibility, ELCRN
- 18:45 Rückfragen**
- 19:15 AUSWEGE AUS DER KRISE: PLENUMS- UND PODIUMSDISKUSSION**
u.a. mit Mokweni Evelyn Mswetsa, Uria Nandiuasora Mazeingo und
Uhuru Dempers
- 20:15 Ausklang und Zeit für informelle Gespräche**
- 21:00 Ende der Veranstaltung**

Remarks at *Afrika neu denken* on German–Namibian Relations and Specific Questions of Colonialism, Reparations and Truth

Nandiasora Mazeingo
Chairperson of Ovaherero Genocide Foundation

Introduction

Thank you very much for this opportunity. I am elated to be here speaking about an issue that for me and the people I descent from is not just history but present-day reality, it continues to define much of our lives in the modern state of Namibia. I am thankful to our many friends in solidarity with our cause for restorative justice without whom my participation this afternoon would not have been possible. Thank you indeed, Dr. Boniface, Goran, Christian, Christine, Josephine and team for the generosity and warmth you've accorded me since arriving in Deutschland, which by the way for me is a return to the country I once came to as a 25 year-old master's student at the Institute of Tax Law at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. Having come through Frankfurt then and having spent a few days in Saarland (Saarbrücken) before proceeding on to Münster in North-Rhine Westfalia for a while, my being here is indeed a return to familiar territory. And it truly feels like yesterday, funny, how time flies. I am sorry, but my German has long deserted me!

Now, just to briefly introduce myself. My name is Nandiasora Mazeingo, widely known as Nandi, which truly is a mere shortened version of the full name Nandiasora. I serve as a Chairperson of the Ovaherero Genocide Foundation and in that capacity I double as the principal advisor on genocide and restorative justice matters to the Paramount Chief of the Ovaherero people, Professor Dr. Mutjinde Katjiua, and broadly the Ovaherero Traditional Authority, which is the modern successor to an Ovaherero people's governing regime. The Ovaherero Traditional Authority is older than 150 years and today commands an over 90 percent transnational following with a near equal split in total population between Namibia as the homefront and diasporan communities. The latter are historically resident in Botswana and South Africa, where survivors of the German genocidal campaign at the turn of the last century fled to. They are now also joined by new diasporan Ovaherero communities concentrated in largely new centres of the United Kingdom, Canada, USA, but also here in Germany, to a lesser extent.

Because of a sacrosanct union between the Ovaherero and Nama people, nurtured in times of both rivalry and camaraderie emanating on one hand from disputes over commonly-held resources such as water wells and cattle pastures, but equally the dictates of common security and defense as two neighbours on the other hand, I equally serve as a co-chairperson of the Ovaherero-Nama joint-technical forum. My counterpart being Sima whom we were told could not join us. The forum is both an advisory and advocacy platform for our joint people with a shared history and increasingly evident shared future: the Ovaherero of Ovahereroland and the Nama people of Great Namaqualand, who collectively inhabited the land which today constitutes over two-thirds of the territory of the modern state of Namibia. So I speak to you this afternoon



Uria Nandiasora Mazeingo ist selbstständiger Unternehmensberater und arbeitete lange als Chief Economist bei der National Planning Commission von Namibia. In dieser Funktion koordinierte er auch die Umsetzung der SDGs in Namibia. Er leitet die Ovaherero Genocide Foundation, die die Erinnerung an den Völkermord von 1904 bis 1908 wachhält. Er tritt dafür ein, deutsche Entwicklungshilfe in und für Namibia von den wegen des Genozids 1904 erforderlichen Reparationen zu trennen. Auch er ist Mitinitiator der Petition.

fully mandated to represent the voices and aspirations of both Ovaherero and Nama people in their common quest for a genuine resolution to the deep wound inflicted more than a century ago by a German genocidal campaign, and that is to this day still denied justice by successive German governments.

Formally, I was trained in political science, economics with a focus on trade and development, history, and international relations. Before taking on this most fulfilling assignment of contributing to the transgenerational struggle for justice for my people, I served as an economist for the Namibian National Budget Office, but also most proudly as Namibia's focal person under the Namibian Presidency for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and later for their successors, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for about eight years or more.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am tasked to speak on the question of Namibian-German relations, particularly on the question of the Ovaherero-Nama Genocide, which remains the thorniest aspect of that relationship. As a disclaimer or foreword if you like, I want to say that my contribution to this discourse is informed by many factors which best are summarized into four broad categories:

The **first of these categories** has to do with who I am: my own self. And that is, that I am a Black African, a Namibian and Omuhherero, who was born into an Ovaherero society subjected to a century-plus old oppression, exploitation, dispossession, displacement and – reaching the apex of all calamities befalling my people – a genocide at the turn of the last century at the hands of Germans, who later on colluded with Boers or Afrikaners to strip bare my society off of all its dignity and earthly possessions. Tragically, Germans and Afrikaners committed these deeds against my people – not because they were neighbours who had a quarrel over a commonly held resource such as water or cattle pasture, which throughout human history was a probable enough cause for nations and or polities to go to war – but because, in their minds, specifically their worldview and posture of the German elite, my people, my society, the Ovaherero and Nama people of then Ovahereroland and Great Namaqualand in South West Africa respectively, two sovereign polities or states, were sub-human, were creatures with no rights, they were savages. They committed these crimes in pursuit of the widely embraced idea of racial hierarchy and related constructs of “Lebensraum” (finding living space for the “superior aryan race” (the German race) as chiefly espoused by German geographer Friedrich Ratzel), “Rassenschande” and “Endlösung” as applied later on by Nazi Germany, but first experimented on my people by Imperial Commander of the Schutztruppe Lothar von Trotha. Lothar von Trotha called the war with the Ovaherero and Nama a “race war” and did so with the active participation and consent of Kaiser Wilhelm II, to end what was “lebensunwertes Leben” (a life unworthy of life), which had to be disposed off to facilitate the complete seizure of our land, cattle AND total annihilation as a people living in Southern Africa and indeed on this planet.

The **second category** influencing my entry in this debate is the fact that I am a scholar of most of these subjects and thus am deeply rooted in their theoretical underpinnings. I come to this discussion with at least some basic perspectives on much of the thinking around many of these concepts. I, for instance, hold a strong view on what role is assigned to a government in an egalitarian-pluralist society such as Namibia, wherein sovereignty remains vested with the populace unless and until only expressly surrendered on issues where representation is sought and secured through a properly conducted electoral process. In that context, I am convinced that all issues residing outside the orbit of a government's obtained mandate remains solely under the authority of the people themselves. Any attempt to wrestle that authority away and appropriate it to a government without the expressed consent of the people affected by a question has no legitimacy, is undemocratic and an illegality.

The **third category** pertains to my own experience as a public sector development economist, tasked specifically with the administration of development aid under the Namibian Presidency, under the Ecoconomy Ministry version of Namibia called the National Planning Commission, for no less than eight full years; Thus giving me a frontseat to see how development aid, particularly in the developing world, where it constitutes a significant share of the public expenditure envelope, is deployed and or denied to purportedly targeted communities and or persons. So, I come to this conversation with no illusions of what actually happens to aid resources placed at the disposal of governments with a vague subtext that they have to be targeted for communities X or Y but not overtly directing such governments to necessarily do so, specifically so, when such governments do not draw significant followings from segments of the said targeted communities.

Linking up to this as the **fourth category** is, what gives me a special gift to discern the stark contrast between Development Aid (which technically is voluntary or an act of goodwill on the part of the donor and is by nature non-discriminatory in application) AND on the other hand reparations, which draw on culpability for an illegality or criminality and thus are mandatory for atoning or repairing the damage one has inflicted on a specific party and is as such a targeted action seeking to right a wrong. My current assignment as a soldier deployed with a solitary mandate to seek justice through reparations for the Genocide committed against my people, but also my previous assignment of working on Development Aid, give me the privilege of having worked in both worlds. And so I will confidently tell you this early on that the joint declaration (JD) between Germany and Namibia is an Aid Package and not a Reparations Consignment and thus has nothing to do with the question of the Ovaherero and Nama people Genocide... I will later on expand on this.



Historical background and context

Now, knowing fully well that not all of us in this room have context and history to the question at hand, owing to the fact that European colonial history in much of Europe is a highly neglected subject vaguely mentioned in history textbooks, if not altogether ignored, I want to provide a brief synopsis of how Germany comes into the equation and why we, a people somewhat distant to German and European culture, have our eyes fixated on Germany as a party that harmed us egregiously and thus must atone for the irreparable damage it had inflicted upon our societies.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there's little to no contestation that Germany joined imperialism very late. Compared to their cousins in France, Britain (they call themselves Great), the Netherlands and Portugal, this country was minor in so far as colonial expeditions throughout the 19th century were concerned. Many of her sister European colonial powerhouses had already established themselves as great conquerors of African land and riches by the 1870s.

In my neighbourhood of South West Africa (present-day Namibia) and specifically the sovereign polities then known as Ovahereroland and Great Namaqualand respectively, there were already established contracts and a presence of German missionaries during those early years, most specifically from the Protestant and Catholic Church, who were inticed by the idea of colonial possessions. However, German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck at that time, rejected colonies as too risky a financial undertaking and thus claimed to have "no interest in imperial expansion". It therefore took a private German citizen by the name of Adolf Luderitz to set out, through his agent, to South West Africa in 1883, to Great Namaqualand specifically, to engage in what he called a "sales transaction of coastal land" with the purpose of establishing trade (but off course reading the terms today this was rather a cheat of the Nama people out of their land).

It was only after some convincing on the land's prospects, but also the fact that Adolf Luderitz had no capacity to effectively administer supposed newly acquired land, that Chancellor von Bismarck agreed to bring the piece of land under the protection of the German Reich and set Germany on course for more colonial possessions. The following year, 1884, at what is called the "Scramble for Africa Conference", – an assembly of Europeans talking about Africa without Africans, as it is often happening with European decisions about us these days too – hosted by Germany in Berlin, Africa was divided up amongst European powers. Huge chunks of African land were assigned to these powers with little regard for boundaries of what essentially were African nation-states. Of course, European elites then and now largely dismissed these self-governing people they found in their distinct spaces as mere ethnic or tribal groupings with no meaning. Today, the loot from those parts are defined as ethnological arts and displayed as such.

The 1884 "Treaty of Berlin" developed during that conference was a huge victory for new-entrant Germany, which, in addition to claiming South West Africa encompassing Ovahererland and Great Namaqualand, walked away with colonial holdings of modern day Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania and Rwanda, as well as Samoa, New Guinea, and various other Pacific islands such as Nauru, and others. Within just under a decade of its colonial expansion, right on the heels of Britain, France and the Netherlands, Germany grew fast to be the fourth largest colonial empire at the time.

In South West Africa (present day Namibia), Heinrich Göring was deployed as first Imperial Commissioner in April 1885. Of course, we all know who his son Hermann Göring was to become in the Third Reich under the Nazis, and this speaks directly to the evident link between the Ovaherero-Nama genocide and the crimes of the Nazi regime in the 1930s. Young Göring was a good student of his father, he absorbed the racial hierarchies that created the genocidal gaze in Ovahererland and Great Namaqualand at his father's feet and would later apply it against yet another group deemed inferior by Nazi Germany with utter precision and intensity.

Once in South West Africa, Imperial Commissioner Heinrich Göring began immediately to pressure various leaders of established sovereign polities to sign so called "Protection Treaties". The Ovaherero, who historically had not had a central command leadership since 1863, had been led by Paramount Chief Maharero of the Tjamuaha dynasty, residing at the central town of Okahandja in present day Namibia. He was succeeded by his son Samuel Maharero in 1890, who later on died in Botswana as a refugee of the German genocidal war.

The Nama people were led by a formidable Leader, Hendrik Witbooi, whose ability to read, write and follow global politics put him in a different class of African leaders of that era and through his own "Papers" (including a diary which was stolen by Germans and endless correspondences with numerous leaders within his neighbourhood and beyond) left a rich archive for future references but chiefly refuted European perceptions of Africans as savages with no sense of modern civilization and life.

The treaties Göring propagated offered no protection and were often negotiated in such a way, that these polities were cheated out of their land. As more and more Ovaherero and Nama land was wrestled away, the African people decided to resist and rise up in self-defence.

The conduct of the uninvited German guests in Ovahererland and Namaqualand presented these two groupings with no option but to resist. It is estimated that by the end of 1903, 3.5 million hectares had been lost by the Ovaherero to German settler colonialism and railroad construction. As cattle herders in a land with scarce water supplies, the Ovaherero faced a future that would prevent them from continuing their



Die Christuskirche, erbaut 1907 von der Rheinischen Mission und auf einem Hügel gelegen, ist in Windhoek nicht zu übersehen. Sie ist auch ein Symbol der Kolonialgeschichte Namibias.

traditional way of life, which, tragically, did occur as a result of the genocide, the concentration camps, and the German appropriation of their land and cattle.

Realizing that the Germans, in spite of claims to the contrary, had no benign intentions of good neighbourliness but a central objective of dislodging them from their land, heritage and livelihood, on January 12th 1904, from the central town of Okahandja in present day Namibia, the Ovaherero people of the sovereign polity of Ovahererland rose up to repel the encroaching German military and settlers. As hostilities broke out, the Ovaherero scored notable successes at the battle of Okandjira and Oviombo respectively – under specific orders from Paramount Chief Samuel Maharero to spare children and women – it is reported that about 100 Germans fell to Ovaherero warriors. But after considerable planning and reinforcements from Germany, which inter alia saw the old Schutztruppe under Commander Theodor Lutwein withdrawn from South West Africa for embarrassing the German Crown via losing battles to an inferior people and replaced with a ruthless killer armed with an annihilation mandate, General Lothar von Trotha. Several months later, at the Battle of Waterberg, Oham-akari, on August 11th 1904, the German war machine was unleashed on the Ovaherero people – indiscriminately on women, children, civilians – all shot at or driven murderously into the Eastern desert of Kalahari to die of thirst and starvation as German soldiers either poisoned water wells or guarded the wells to ensure no Ovaherero would drink from them.

After two months of pursuing a defenseless people, who had all been militarily neutralized, new German Schutztruppe Commander Lothar von Trotha issued what is known to historians as the first publically pronounced state policy of exterminating a whole people, and thus set a clear path to the 20th century's first recorded genocide. On October 2nd 1904, at the village of Ozombu zo Vindimba near Otjinene in the Omaheke region of Namibia, General von Trotha assembled his troopers and read out what is without doubt not only an order to banish the Ovaherero people from their motherland, what von Trotha called "German territory", but equally cleans them off the face of the earth.

Consequent to that extermination order, which is widely available in many writings on early Namibian History – it is such devilish language, I would not ever want to read it out loud – the Ovaherero people would be hunted and killed at sight, and only a lucky few would cross over into neighbouring British-ruled Botswana and South Africa, where descendants of survivors live to present day. Some few would take refuge in the wild inside Namibia, still, these few would, with the collusion of the church, later be rounded-up and thrown into concentration camps, where extermination continued.

Having seen first hand how their Northern Ovaherero neighbours were disposed off by German invaders of their land and knowing fully that the Germans would turn to them next, the Nama people of Great Namaqualand, in the same month of October 1904, rose up to resist the same encroachment of German military and settlers. Savvy in guerrilla warfare, the Nama people, equally targeted with an extermination order akin to that against the Ovaherero issued on April 23rd 1905 by the same German General von Trotha and fully consented to by Kaiser Wilhelm II, were able to hold out the Germans through targeted attacks on their military installations and infrastructure, to disrupt military supplies and reinforcements until at least 1907, when they, owing to full complicity of German missionaries, surrendered; and as their Northern neutralized Ovaherero people, who had taken refuge in the wild, were lured into German captivity of concentration camps, to begin yet another phase of German extermination pursuits.

Whilst most concentration camps were operated from the main centres of Windhoek, Okahandja, Karibib, and Swakopmund (with some privately run for cheap supply of labour), a special camp targeting the Nama people who were rejected as "unworkable"

and thus of no material use to the Colony's economy, was operated at the Southern coastal town of Angra Pequena, which was named by Portuguese and later on took the name of Adolf Luderitz – Luderitz Town – on a small island called Shark Island, and would provide a blueprint for what the Nazi regime later perfected into death camps in Europe.

Germany's reign in what later was formally established as Namibia ended abruptly when she lost the first world war and with it all colonial possessions. Following the Treaty of Versailles, South West Africa became a Trustee Mandate Territory of Britain and it had to be administered on Britain's behalf by South Africa. That arrangement would see yet another protracted struggle of over seven decades for South Africa to relinquish her grip and allow Namibia as a modern state to be born on the 21st of March 1990.

The damage done to the two then sovereign nation-states of Ovaherero and Great Namaqualand, which have since ceased to exist, is unimaginable. More so specifically for the Ovaherero and Nama people, for whom the legacy of that era as manifested in landlessness, displacement and abject poverty is not only history but present-day reality, defining their everyday lives.

In summary, German invasions into their lives, inter alia resulted in the following:

- ♦ 81 percent (65,000) of the Ovaherero, and 50 percent (10,000) of the Nama people were murdered by the Schutztruppe. This included the banishment of the Ovaherero and Nama people to Botswana, Cameroon, and South Africa. Ovaherero and Namaqualand (originally over 50,000 square miles) and countless cattle were seized without compensation by German colonists – with the explicit consent of the German colonial authorities. Today, that original Ovaherero- and Namaland sits in the hands of the German and Afrikaaners' great-great-grandchildren of those who stole it.
- ♦ Notwithstanding the commendable efforts over many decades since that genocidal war, through their own agency and thus testimony to their resilience as a people, Ovaherero and Nama descendants of victims continue to reel on the margins of society in conditions of squalor and destitute. Many more remain scattered across Southern Africa and recently much of the world, with no right of returning to the land of their forebearers.

The Ovaherero and Nama people position on the German-Namibia Joint Declaration

That sad history of Germany's ugly deeds back in South West Africa was for a long time hidden or simply put down, including in the modern state of Namibia, where it was considered muddling the German-Namibian bilateral relations. This posture of the new Namibian state created useful conditions for the counterpart Germany, which conveniently sought to remain detached from its unprecedented and uncivilized history of racism and violence for as long as it could keep it in the dark. The new Namibian state, through walking over that chapter, facilitated the neglect of that history but importantly Germany's ability to thus far evade her responsibility to account for her racist and genocidal past.

However, thanks to the efforts of the now late Ovaherero Paramount Chief Dr. Kuaima Riruako, doubling as an opposition MP, who introduced the matter to the Namibian Parliament in 2006. He, in close collaboration with his Nama counterpart, Gaob Dawid Frederick, successfully pushed that Motion in Parliament and achieved unanimous



Grabmal Werner Schenk Freiherr von Stauffenberg (1878–1904), Leutnant in kaiserlicher Schutztruppe ab dem 30.08.1904. Nahm am 09.09.1904 am Gefecht von Owinaua-Naua teil. Verstarb am 18.12.1904 an Typhus in Owinaua-Naua. Begraben auf dem Friedhof der alten Kirche der Rheinischen Mission in Okahandja.

consent via adoption. Of course, speaking to the lack of lust with which this matter was and is received by the governing Swapo majority, given that to this date it has not erected a single fitting monument in remembrance of the victims of that era or proclaimed a commemoration day on the national calendar, Dr. Kuaima did not have it easy. Evidently, compromises had to be struck in the face of unrelenting efforts of the governing majority to wrestle the struggle for justice away from the Ovaherero and Nama people, who had championed it. The Motion would, for instance, make no direct mention of them as the teased out and targeted people, albeit the evidence employed in pursuit of justice, which makes the singularity of their experience no secret.

Furthermore, the Namibian Executive, the government, wrestling this matter away from the Namibian Parliament without a mandate to do so, set out to negotiate within a period of seven years, on a bilateral basis, with the Federal Government of Germany on a joint declaration and thereby continued the exclusion of the affected communities.

What emerged from this sham process, which lacked legitimacy in terms of representation by us as representatives of the affected communities and was shrouded in secrecy, is a document that we as the Ovaherero and Nama people have rejected as both a sellout and an insult.

I will attempt to flag reasons why we absolutely and emphatically reject that document in two broad categories, one being issues of process or framework and the other having to do with its content. Later on, I will talk about the way forward and about what we all can do together whilst we audaciously wait for a serious partner for a genuine closure to this matter haunting all of us.

Process issues/framework: consultation and participation and or representation

Contrary to the mandate of the 2006 Parliamentary Motion which speaks to participation of representatives of targeted/affected communities alongside the Namibian Government which was designated as an interested party but not sole negotiator, a Special Envoy, in the person of the late Namibian Diplomat Dr. Zedekia Ngavirue, was appointed in a manner that directly violates the spirit and content of that Motion. His appointment as a sole representative of the Namibian voice at the negotiation table, without consultation of Namibian stakeholders, was an arbitrary act of the Executive and an overreach which translated directly into a usurpation of the rights of Ovaherero and Nama people who, for generations, single-handedly waged their struggle but now were condemned to mere attaches to a state Envoy advancing a state agenda that necessarily was not in congruence with theirs.

Therefore, our view as targeted and affected communities is, that this state action indeed is an overstatement of the exercise and or application of sovereignty by the government as an agent of the state. As I argued earlier, sovereignty, unless expressly sought and secured through a properly administered electoral exercise, remains exclusively vested in the people who, in a democracy, are the sovereigns. The governing Swapo majority has at no point in the last six or so electoral seasons in which it had competed sought the mandate of Ovaherero and Nama people to speak for them on restorative justice issues. A question that is yet to feature on their political program (otherwise known as manifestos). The shameless attempt over the past 30 plus years to wrestle representation away from the owners of the struggle without even running a referendum, is an outright illegality and criminality for which there is no justification in law and politics. It is an exercise with no legitimacy.

The idea that once elected into Office, as espoused by the administration in Windhoek, a government assumes and or appropriates all representation rights over people to itself – in an attitude I call absolutist representation – is not in sync with the principles of democratic, inclusive governance and is frankly a lunacy rejected by the Ovaherero and Nama people as a whole.

Our view therefore remains that the talks which had gone on for a good seven years or so without us had not been structurally congruent with the formulation envisaged under the 2006 Namibian Parliamentary Motion on Genocide and thus null and void – they are of no effect.

The complete expropriation of a people's right to self-representation in a matter so specific and personal by a government, in our view, has no precedence in history and law. It is a modern Namibian first and as Ovaherero and Nama people we decline the invitation to have any part in it.

Therefore, as we move forward, our position remains that the overdue tripartite talks envisioned under the Namibian Parliamentary Motion sponsored by our late Paramount Chief Riruako in 2006 and unanimously adopted by that House which, as a co-equal branch of the Namibian state architecture, holds the exclusive mandate to administer it, must begin as soon as possible. We, the representatives of our people, stand ready to represent our people, without any unsolicited representation over our voices. We are perfectly capable of steering our own affairs, more so to conduct self-representation on a matter so uniquely to the Ovaherero and Nama. Accordingly, we say that no bilateral (state-to-state) substitute can usurp our right to self-representation and an organically grown definition for what justice for historical wrongs committed against us entails. It is no news that we have given notice to the Namibian Government to cease and desist its illegitimate process of speaking in our matters without our consent and fully return this process to Parliamentary Chambers where mandate for oversight and execution resides.



Von diesem Haus aus bei Keetmanshoop im Süden Namibias soll der Kommandant der deutschen „Schutztruppe“ Lothar von Trotha den Vernichtungsbefehl gegen die Herero und Nama unterzeichnet haben.

Content based issues

Under this section, I will try to methodically dissect the issues of the 2006 Namibian Parliamentary Motion on Genocide which the German-Namibian Joint Declaration expressly references under its Preamble as a focal point.

Given that the said Motion is hinged on four pillars, I will start with the first and move along to the last:

Pillar 1: *Germany admits guilt (and naturally accruing culpability) for its crime of genocide against the Ovaherero and Nama people as sanctioned by General Lothar von Trotha, an agent and deployee of Kaiser Wilhelm II, thus highest German authority;*

Under the JD, Germany, seemingly the sole author of the text (with Namibia's acquiescence), declines admission of guilt and in fact denies it on the premise of apparent European laws of the time (ignoring some of the other Treaties of that time as well which forbade such conduct) that the mass killing of savages or subhuman (which Ovaherero and Nama people in its worldview at the time were) is no crime. It is therefore only a crime in today's law wherein these savages have now assumed human rights and status. Back then it wasn't and Germany borrows this stance from her position elsewhere including in her own court papers in the suits we had filed in the US courts. And she employs masterclass statecraft to bring that message home whilst concealing it from the uneducated and unsuspecting. She writes these acts can be termed "a genocide from today's perspective" and leaves out the part that says they were not then and therefore not a crime. Clear denial!

Following the inbuilt compromises of the 2006 Parliamentary motion, dictated to by the majority to omit any mention of the targeted communities and thus nationalize the issue so as to allow the Namibian government to wrestle it away from its rightful owners, the JD equally makes no mention of the targeted communities, albeit they were mentioned by name under the specific German state Proclamations.

Pillar 2: *Consequent of admission of guilt by Germany to a crime of genocide, the targeted communities have a right in law to seek punitive action and redress. Reparations is long internationally defined as the penalty for the crime of genocide and so it becomes obligatory upon German admission of guilt for her to pay.*

Under the JD, Germany declines guilt admission under Pillar 1 and thus inherently equally denies the obligation to pay reparations. Accordingly, it gravitates away to other concepts of healing, reconciliation and reconstruction through government administered project financing. All such aspects are integral to the final closure but secondary to the prosecution of a crime of genocide, securing a guilty verdict and imposing penalties, which essentially are what the 2006 Motion is about.

With all legal culpabilities refused by Germany, the discussions derailed into realms of politics and morality with Germany, the wrong-doer dictating terms of what it can and wants to give 'to heal the wounds' of the past wrongs. Repeating what happened in Berlin 1884, when, without our presence and consent, we became a German possession on Germany's own terms. Germany, with the acquiescence of her client, the Namibian state, decided that a Billion euros spread over 30 years was all that her crime of destroying two sovereign countries was worth.

Not to mention the years' difference between the enumeration of the wrongful acts in the Joint Declaration and their actual commitment. With no regard for the value money loses over time, the JD – again, without appropriate representation of those who were affected by that crime and continue to reel under its legacy – fully assigns

the right to seal a final installment and thus full settlement for any claims in terms of these past crimes to governments and fully arrogates to itself knowledge of what justice for these individuals is and or ought to be.

Knowing fully well she cannot deny having committed the genocidal acts as mountains of evidence exists, she says: “Yes, I Did it, but I was right to do it and therefore out of my goodwill, I will put you off with a 30-years thinly spread Billion Euros to deprive you and your children your right to ever claim back what is your inheritance and right. Still, you are too poor and insignificant to engage directly and so I will contract a government-administered distant cousin of yours to receive and manage this sum for you. You must be happy I am even prepared to do this because it was so long ago and I am not liable.”

As a matter of fact, speaking to the denial of the crime of genocide by Germany and deliberate machinations to avoid legal culpability, there’s no single mention of the term Reparations in the whole text of the JD.

And so, in simple terms, the JD is firmly established as a Development Aid Package as opposed to a Reparations Envelope which the 2006 Namibian Parliamentary Motion has sanctioned. It thus accordingly ceases to be a matter of special interest for Ovaherero and Nama people, but instead presents itself to be an issue between two governments exchanging support for mutual cooperation.

Attesting to this being a Development Aid Package which necessarily is non-discriminatory and thus applied universally, its proposed delivery mode speaks of government programs as a vehicle, albeit to be targeted to specific regions, owing deliberately to a refusal to acknowledge who the crimes targeted and regions which historically were predominantly inhabited by the two targeted groupings, but with the post-independence demographics transformation and shift, are now largely domains of originally Northern communities, with Ovaherero and Nama confined to specific pockets of former native reserves in those mentioned seven regions.

Pillar 3: *Seek German apology for the criminal deeds committed.*

Not surprisingly, as shallow words don’t cost much, specifically when powered by high-caliber statecraft, the JD banks its only success under this pillar in that Germany agrees to apologize. The only problem being, that one can’t apologize for what one can’t mention by name without qualification, and when at the same time one is denying wrongdoing.

Equally, as genocide is not a crime against a state – it is long defined as a wrongful deed against specifically targeted persons or groups of persons, largely tribal or ethnical with their own names – there can be no apology to the Namibian state when the people who were wronged are excluded. People who, for the large part without a nickel from the Namibian government, have waged that struggle by their bootstraps. Such a disingenuous apology is roundly rejected and flatly refused even before it comes.

Speaking to the sham-ness of the exercise, it is clear that any negotiator worth their mettle would recognize that one cannot progress further when the fundamental pillar of guilt admission is refused because it has a nullifying effect. Yet for seven years or more the process continued and what it delivered are 360 months installments summing up to one Billion Euros, loosing value over time, paid to the Namibian government without guarantees of reaching the affected communities, and a shallow apology to House stuffed up with a majority that has little to no direct knowledge and or link to the criminal deeds under question.

Pillar 4: The fourth pillar of *representation* is already talked about under issues of Process and Framework. The Namibian government, assigned the role of an interest party, wholly appropriates negotiations oversight and administration to itself and closed-off others or demoted them to mere attaches to its sole-conceived and administered processes.

Conclusion: The JD does not serve the 2006 Namibian Parliamentary Motion, it makes of a mockery of it.

Key missing essentials of the Reparations Package missing from JD-Extracts from the UN Basic principles and guidelines on the right to a remedy and reparation for victims of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law:

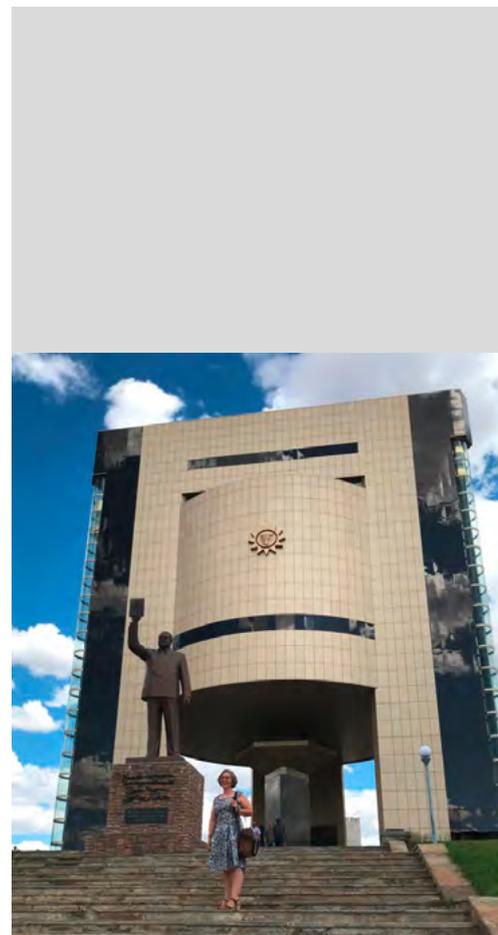
- ◆ Restitution
- ◆ Damages Compensation
- ◆ Rehabilitation
- ◆ Satisfaction
- ◆ Guarantees of non-repetition

Other general observations and commentaries on the JD and Germany's attitude in the midst of it all

On simple observation, there's a stark contrast between the political and diplomatic position of the German Foreign Office and its legal arguments filed in court-papers on the other hand. Whilst on the political and diplomatic front Germany projects itself as a modern state striving to reconcile its dark history with a human-centred futuristic posture seeking to build bridges between people ('people' including victims of its racist and genocidal history), in the halls of law on the other hand, Germany employs every trick to avoid and deny legal culpabilities for its historical wrongs. It as such reverses all gains it makes on the other track as they are mutually exclusive and incompatible. Germany can't make her cake and eat it.

And these contradictions are no coincidence or mishap, they are deliberate, they are the work of remarkable statecraft tactfully conceived to mislead a docile public that perceives Germany as genuinely pursuing noble intentions of finding closure to legal and moral questions whilst, in essence, remaining intransigent and disingenuous to seeing through such a matter. We are no fools and thus sees through these contradictions.

The very essence is that Germany refuses to admit guilt to the crime of Genocide as codified under international law, arguing instead that the crime is only such under present perspectives, namely a genocide from today's perspective. She succinctly deploys an age-old racist argument of the German elite of those days that we as a people were subhuman and thus justifiably expandable to give way for the superior German race to their Lebensraum AND as such are savages who hold to no recourse in law. Even though the laws of war and other international instruments at the time forbade Germany from conducting itself in the matter it did, through the prism of Germany, such laws only apply to members of the superior races, including our Jewish brothers and sisters – whom they saw as inferior to them, but because they are of Caucasian ancestry, they would at least lay claim to recourse in such laws – not us, black Africans.



Das Unabhängigkeitsmuseum Namibias mit dem Bronze-Denkmal des ersten namibischen Präsidenten Sam Nujoma.

Famously listed disunity amongst Ovaherero and Nama people and thus rented representation

This idea is at most laughable but equally condescending, particularly as it is often voiced by German politicians. I mean, is Germany the country that since the 2nd World War has had perhaps only one or two single party majority governments the one to give lectures on unity and joint politics? How many times in recent times has Germany, and indeed much of Western Europe, been thrown into a state near paralysis following close electoral outcomes culminating in hung Parliaments, all because of fractured politics, isn't that a division as well?

Seriously, the idea that, when Africans have dissenting views in keeping with pluralist governance orders in their societies is termed division this warrants others to meddle with and appropriate their representation rights away – BUT then is just democracy when Europeans have similar dissenting voices in their societies – is preposterous in the least. This idea, often voiced by a German politician who was involved in the negotiations, is with no merit. Divisions and or dissenting views amongst our ranks is no right for anybody to argue that we cannot represent ourselves, it certainly is not a reason for Germany to do so, when for the last 30 years or so, she couldn't agree on a single majority party to govern it.

Way forward

I want to state that the divergence between us is real, given and most likely protracted. The government of Namibia, with convenient aid by Germany, is narrowing this talk to being just about the size of the money package. For us, the discussion is a way away from this:

1. First and principally, we want the Genocide to be discussed as a crime and not to be discussed as a moral and political construct/gesture which allows Germany to dictate the terms of its handling. Our conviction is, that the return to Genocide as a legal construct with legal culpabilities will naturally restore our rights as victims to speak for ourselves and to represent ourselves. The government of Namibia has its role defined by the Motion already – in our view, that role suffices and so it must confine itself to it! We are perfectly capable of defining our own justice and that



In diesem Raum des Unabhängigkeitsmuseums befindet sich seit Dezember 2022 die Dauerausstellung „Stolen Moments. Namibian Music History Untold“ .
(<https://www.kasa.de/service/ausstellungen/detailausstellungen/stolen-moments-namibian-music-history-untold/>)

inherently means conducting direct talks and settlement with us! Just like it was done with Jews around the globe, who assembled in around 23 Committees and formed the Conference of Claims of Jews Worldwide and negotiated directly with Germany. The fact, that our people are scattered all over the world, with no single to claim sole monopoly over us, we believe that the Jewish model will serve as a solid basis for a framework to be imported to our case.

2. As for the modalities around delivering the reparations package (not development aid) our people must be sought out by name and teased out in their known localities as communities and individuals (Otjinene, Omatjete, Otjizingue, Ovitoto, Okamatapati, Okotjituuo, Ozonahi, Epukiro, Otjombinḁe, Omongua, Ongama, Okondjaḁu AND importantly Otjauana and RSA diasporan communities) and engaged directly.
3. The terms applied to individuals and communities in Namibia must, to the extent possible, be replicated to those individuals and communities finding themselves in the diaspora. For them, certain things such as the rights of return and or repatriation are important. The JD says nothing about it.
4. The full and comprehensive return of body parts of our ancestors that still litter museums in Europe must be guaranteed under the final settlement as an obligation, not something done by Germany at her own volition which now she terms “loaning back” of looted colonial artefacts and body parts. Again, to deliberately stay away from culpabilities accruing from crimes of theft around this.
5. A full reparations program does not have to be invented anew, the template of Israeli-German talks has served the world, it can take twists and tweaks here and there to speak to our situation, but our view is, that the fundamentals are already there to build-on. The Ovaherero-Nama genocide was the laboratory in which all crimes of the Third Reich were experimented on if not perfected; The two periods in German history are intrinsically intertwined.

What is to be done by the German populace, the friends of our struggle?

First, we, as a people, recognize that with the disingenuous state of the German political elite, we have reached a dead-end, a state of paralysis. We therefore ask the friendly German civil organizations and individuals to do the following:

- ♦ To actively lobby for the altogether scrapping of the JD in its current form, because it is an exercise in futility. It will not solve any problems. Do not let the politicians waste your money. Hear it from us, that the JD would be the reason that in a thousand years from today our children will be haunting yours, demanding the same thing we are demanding today.
- ♦ Let us all pause, reflect, and start on clean slate. Do not let any government of the day dictate our programs with the idea that they are the only ones to offer a solution. Let us strive to work on a solution today, but let us leave room for tomorrow, as today is corrupted and doesn't allow us to do justice to the work at hand. Let us outpace and outlive all those who are disingenuous. Let us look to the future for solutions.
- ♦ Mobilize your citizenry to demand change from your political elite. They know that what was good for the Jews is also good for the Ovaherero and Nama people. Let us not have artificial roadblocks of state-exclusivity derail us from the real business at hand.
- ♦ As Ovaherero and Nama leaderships, we recognize this to be a long-haul journey. We are prepared to stay at it for so long as is necessary to ensure that this struggle,

which was guarded across generations before being handed down to us with a right of inheritance but equally a responsibility of guarding and bequeathing it fully to our children and their grandchildren. Therefore, we ask that you join us in supporting our own self-help initiatives in terms of support for education programs in the forms of scholarships, community-based micro-projects and other interventions in particularly the beef sector, where our people have always retained comparative advantage. This plea for support and partnership is a very important part of my journey around Germany and will be further buttressed by a visit of the Ovaherero Paramount Chief Professor Dr. Mutjinde Katjiua. A little more than a few months back, he launched an ambitious self-funded and administered Ovaherero Development Agenda and will be here next month to talk more about that program and much more. It is a program we are promoting around the world and so we ask that you engage with me and have a dialogue on how we can work together to deal with the immediate challenges of poverty and outright destitution amongst these communities denied justice for over a century.

Before I go, I want to state that there can be no serious settlement on this question without directly speaking **to the individual and collective responsibility of the following three specific groupings**. And I will address them separately:

- The first is the Church, I am Guest of a Catholic Academy. I ask for the nature of the obligation of the church particularly, because we know that it played a direct role in pacifying our people for later being preyed on across much of Africa; but especially in the case of Namibia, where Missionaries were criminally complicit for luring our people out of their refuge in the wild, where they had hidden themselves fearing for their lives under German rule. It was the church that was recruited to falsely spread a message of truce and pardoning by the German Emperor and thus drew thousands back into the villages and towns, where they would be handed over to the German authority. They then faced captivity and eventual death in the concentration camps. What would be the mandatory role and responsibility for the church under a settlement?
- The second is the Business. As a South-West-African then and Namibian today, I know for certain, that had it not been for business, my land would probably not have been captured by Germany, at least not in the day of Bismarck, who, by all accounts, was a reluctant Imperialist Officer. It was business, through Adolf Lüderitz, that heralded the capture of my ancestral land by Imperial Germany. It too was business, which so-called “discovered” and plundered underground resources of my land for profit and repatriated all to the homeland. It was business chiefly, which continued the practice of annihilation of my people in concentration camps through forced labor for profit. Business profited enormously and the most. E. g. the Woermann Brock group continues to operate in Namibia. Therefore, I ask about the culpabilities of Business in all of this. Within the German-Israeli package, I am aware that there is a special role embedded in a specific agreement speaking to the responsibility of Business.
- Last but not least, as pertains to perhaps the most central theme of our restoration struggle: The land we lost, the land we never got back. Our ancestral land luckily did not take flight to anywhere, but remains in Namibia, as it was in 1884. Only paper ownership following lootings has changed. The important question any settlement must address, is the positive contribution descendants of German and Afrikaaner settlers and farmers in Namibia must play in the process of land reform, restitution or restoration, call it what you like. The current Proprietors of the land cannot sit idle as if he/she is not a beneficiary of a loot. A clearly defined role, duty and responsibility for the current occupants of the land must be defined, as we are to move genuinely forward with the noble concepts of reconciliation, reconstruction and healing.

The Limits of Decolonizing the Past

2

Heike Becker
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The German government has, at long last, officially acknowledged the colonial genocide in Namibia. An agreement between the German and Namibian governments was concluded in late May 2021. According to the agreement, more correctly: the joint declaration of intent, Germany will offer a formal apology for the first genocide of the 20th century; the deal also stipulates additional German development aid for Namibia. These funds will be earmarked for special “reconciliation and reconstruction” projects to benefit the Ovaherero and Nama communities that were directly affected by the genocide.

However, important questions remain: To which extent is Germany committed to “working through” its violent colonial past following decades of avoidance? What further steps are needed in dealing with the colonial past? Will the deal turn the tide more broadly for reparation claims from ex-colonies of the empires of European colonialism? What could it mean for negotiating the past between Namibia and its second colonizer, South Africa? What solidarities are being forged in moves towards decolonization, racial justice and re-distribution?

Two crucial points of course have been at the core of the contestations around the agreement:

1) *Reparations:*

The German government succeeded to avoid paying reparations. Esther Muinjangu, the former Chairperson of the Ovaherero Genocide Foundation, stated that “development aid can never replace reparations”.

The federal government has also on numerous occasions insisted that it would not pay a cent more than the funds in the signed “agreement”, to the amount of 1.3 Billion Euro, which will be paid over the next thirty years.

Recently, the demands by the Polish government that Germany should pay 1.3 trillion Euro for the death and destruction it brought to Poland during World War II has sparked fresh hope that Namibia can push for the renegotiation of its deal for genocide reparations. About six million Polish, including three million Polish Jews, were killed, and Warsaw was razed to the ground following the uprising in 1944 during which about 200 000 civilians died. So the Polish government is demanding reparations to the amount of literally a 1000 times more than what Germany committed to pay to Namibia. The German government has however declined the Polish demands as much as it keeps saying that it won't pay more to Namibia.



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2) *The fact that the descendants of the victims were largely excluded from the negotiations:*

Germany celebrated the agreement as a political and moral triumph. Ovaherero and Nama however criticized it. As they had done for years, descendants of the victims protested that they had not been properly involved in the process. If any agreement between a former colonizing power and the formerly colonized should stand a chance of bringing about justice and reconciliation, those affected must be closely listened to.

3) There is the *question of international ramifications* of an agreement that would include proper reparations:

There is an underlying conjecture of the reparations issue; its potential international ramifications. The German government fears more claims from ex-colonies and also claims from countries such as Greece, which have never received compensation for World War Two war crimes. Furthermore: The fears of former empires, such as Britain, France and Belgium, and not in the least Namibia's second colonizer, South Africa, have been the proverbial elephant in the room: Would Germany's acceptance of its colonial past responsibility open the floodgates to a surge of claims by formerly colonized nations against their erstwhile colonizers?

Restitutions: symbolic reparations, not quite...

Important is, if we speak about reparations, they are not necessarily always and not even mostly financial.

Symbolic commemorations of Germany's African genocide have taken place over the past few years. Human remains of genocide victims were repatriated from Germany to Namibia. These had been shipped to academic and medical institutions in Germany, and had remained there until recently. Cultural objects, which had been stolen during colonial conquest, were also returned to Namibia from the Linden Museum in Stuttgart, and lately, a number of objects have also been returned to Namibia from the Ethnological Museum in Berlin – although under the somewhat weird title “permanent loans”. Other former German colonies have also begun to claim restitution. In 2018, Tanzania requested the repatriation of human remains, which are being stored in German museums and academic institutions.

The President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation promised support and funding for provenance research on collections of human remains with the perspective of repatriation to Cameroon, Togo und Papua New Guinea.

Currently, discussions have been brought up about the very large number of cultural objects from Tanzania, kept in institutions in Germany. And we have seen the commitment of SPK to return Mama Ngonso, as the Cameroonian Nso activists refer to their spiritual ancestor's statue, until now exhibited in the Humboldt Forum.

The matter of decolonising the public space by renaming streets and honouring significant persons from the German colonial and Black history also seems to have been picking up – Stuttgart just announced that it will rename a square after Anton Wilhelm Amo, and hopefully the long-contested issue of the M*straße in Berlin will also be resolved, along with those in the so-called African Quarter in Wedding. Hopefully the next time I meet Sima in Berlin, this will be on Cornelius Fredericksstraße rather than on Lüderitzstraße!



The limits of decolonizing the past

Things seem to have been shifting. Until very recently – make that: last year: The attempts at addressing the German colonial past have thus far been half-hearted and contradictory. While the “reconciliation agreement/declaration” was presented in Germany with some fanfare, controversy remained around the Humboldt-Forum, housed in the reconstructed royal Prussian palace in central Berlin that was built at a cost of over 680 Million Euro. After the final openings last month, ethnographic collections are now being exhibited in the historical centre of imperial Germany. The Humboldt-Forum has been at the centre of highly critical responses from anti-colonial and black community civil society organisations, cultural workers, historians and anthropologists.

There is still no move, however, to commemorate the victims of German colonial violence and genocide in a central place of remembrance in Berlin.

Entangled memory: from violent pasts to new solidarities

The question remains, how much real change can come from the symbolic engagement with the colonial past. Proper reparations are important. Ovaherero and Nama people have suffered economic deprivation and social disintegration as a consequence of the genocide.

A future-oriented trajectory will point out that Germany’s culture of remembrance has to face the challenge of the country to understand its own history within European colonialism.

Today, the colonial roots of racism and inequality, as well as the systematization of racial studies and eugenics in Nazi Germany, continue to raise questions about the politics of remembrance and decolonization. They challenge public debates in Germany that have frequently posited colonialism and Holocaust memory against each other. To move away from this misconceived notion, new cross-community and transnational solidarities are needed:

A good example: Hastily buried human remains that were found on the site of the former KWI-A, for instance, were found that they could be the remains of Nazi crimes or be from colonial era anthropological collections. This uncertainty gave rise to new solidarities. Representatives of Jewish, Black, and Sinti and Roma communities now work together to ensure that these human remains are treated with dignity.

We also have to be clear that the “reconciliation agreement/declaration” is owed, more than anything else, to the post-colonial remembrance work by civil society activists over the last 15 years. An alliance also took to the streets of Berlin in 2021 after the unsatisfactory agreement was tabled: Long time campaigners were joined by young activists from the Black Lives Matter movement.

Despite its many faults, the joint declaration can hopefully become an impetus for the former colonial rulers and the formerly colonized to finally begin a meaningful conversation about the difficult divided history. The question arises, as to whether civil society in Germany and Namibia can foster a solidarity-based transnational post-colonial policy of reconciliation and justice.

For German society, the challenge is to move away from the idea that colonialism was an issue that affected “not us, but the others” (like British and French). Instead, there is a need for Germans to develop new ties of solidarity with Namibia and the other former German colonies. Certainly, the important question will be: What does colonialism have to do with me?

In Conflict with the Compromise: Voices from Namibia on the “Reconciliation Agreement” between Germany and Namibia

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Vertreterin der Ovaherero Genocide Foundation im Exil

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, comrades and compatriots. There are voices from the Namas and Hereros scattered all over the world due to genocide. And they are rejecting the racist segregational reconciliation agreement in its totality. Recently, South Africa’s media was in frenzy over the comments made by University of Cape Town (UCT) Political Science lecturer Dr. Lwazi Lushaba. He commented, that Hitler “committed no crime” because “all Hitler did, was, to do to the white people what white people had normally reserved for black people”.

Although colonialism came to an end more than half a century ago, academics such as Prof. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Professor and Chair of Epistemologies of the Global South with Emphasis on Africa at the University of Bayreuth in Germany) has posit that the remaining remnant of colonialism is coloniality. One of the localities of coloniality is the belief that Nama and Herero people’s (black) lives don’t matter. In order to highlight this point, let us look at the “reconciliation agreement” by comparing it with the agreement between the German government and the Israeli people as well as the Israeli state. The Nama-Herero genocide and the Jewish holocaust do not compete with each other. However, the German government’s selective memory and differential treatments must be called out.

The mere fact that the German government struggled to come to the admission, that what they committed against the Nama and Herero people was genocide, is damning. We thought the world had moved to a time where human rights were universally accepted and understood in the same way. Historians have all recorded that the Nama-Herero genocide was the first genocide of the 20th century. The very fact that this undisputable fact was debated, shows that the German government still thinks of black people’s lives with disdain.

The payment structure in the agreement also smacks of the idea of a white master monitoring the expenditure of inferior blacks, so that they don’t waste the master’s money. Why is it, that when it comes to the Jewish victims of the holocaust, they can set up a claims conference to administer the reparations for themselves instead of it being administered by the Israeli government – but when it comes to the Nama-Herero people, it is the Namibian government that must administer it on behalf of the Nama-Herero people? Why does money go straight to the Jewish but it cannot go straight to the Nama and Herero traditional authorities that are competent to administer it?



Mokweni Evelyn Mswetsa (Kamburona) ist eine Nachfahrin der Ovaherero und wohnhaft in Südafrika. Sie ist eine führende Expertin im Bildungsbereich sowie in der Entwicklung von Lehrplänen und ist am Bildungsministerium in Südafrika tätig. Sie ist Mitglied des Landesarbeitskomitees der Kommunistischen Partei Südafrikas und leitet die Kommission für Internationale und Volksfronten. Sie ist zudem eine der Aktivist*innen, die die Petition ins Leben gerufen haben, in der direkte Entschädigungen für die Nachkommen der vom Völkermord betroffenen Gemeinschaften gefordert werden. Außerdem ist sie eine der Vertreter*innen der Diaspora in der Ovaherero Genocide Foundation (OGF).

The worst aspect is, that the Namibian and German governments also dictate how much of the money will be spent on what. Are the Nama and Herero people that cognitively underdeveloped that they can't be given the opportunity to determine themselves on what the money should be spent? It is the Nama and Herero themselves that know their own needs and do not need the governments to take the decisions for them.

What the world needs to ask now, is: Why don't the two genocides get equal standing by the German government and the German people? An estimated 6 million Jews died at the hands of the Nazi Germans. At the same time, the Nama and Herero people are today a minority group because the German colonisers killed 80 % of the Hereros and 2/3 of the Nama population. Is this different approach towards the Nama-Herero genocide due to the fact that they are black? Or perhaps because they are the children of a lesser God?

After fifteen years since the tabling of the said motion by Paramount Chief Riruako, the Federal Republic of Germany and Namibian government have embarked on negotiations on a government-to-government level and have finally come to determine a reconciliation agreement which unfortunately excludes the descendants of the victims of the 1904–1908 genocide in the diaspora. The 1.3 billion deal signed or to be signed between the two countries is meant for developmental projects in Namibia, and does not include victims outside the border of Namibia. Understandably, these agreements are part of bilateral relations which only cover German and Namibia, however, excluding Hereros and Namas outside the borders of Namibia isn't justified.

The “reconciliation agreement” – not reparation agreement – is a treason towards my ancestors, who are still lying there in Germany's museums. We therefore stand opposed and reject the reconciliation agreement initialled or to be signed by the government of Namibia and the Federal Republic of Germany in the strongest possible terms, as it is a blasphemous attempt by Germany to undermine the demand for reparations on genocide. It can't be about us without us, anything about us without us is against us. If you ignore the latter, it means, you are not addressing our cause.

Given the above, we reject the initial reconciliation agreement negotiated without the participation of the legitimate representatives of the majority of the victim communities with the contempt it deserves. It is not worth the paper it's written on and we urge the United Nations, the African Union, and the rest of the international community to reject this gimmick by Germany and Namibia. Shout with us.

However, in the absence of these voices, **the people are determined to shout from the wilderness, and will not give up until they are heard!** We demand **reparation** to all the affected communities who were forced to scatter around the globe due to this gruesome action by the German government to the Herero and Nama people. We, the Nama and Herero people in and outside Namibia, declare that our understanding of reparation is, that it shall render justice by removing or redressing the consequences of the wrongful acts and by preventing and deterring violations. Is there such in the current agreement?

We want to believe that reparation scope and content covers both monetary and non-monetary aspects and it has five forms:

- ◆ restitution,
- ◆ compensation, rehabilitation,
- ◆ satisfaction and
- ◆ guarantees of non-repetition

To the Namibian government: We did not vote for you. We did not give you a mandate to negotiate on our behalf, because we exist. Why deny us reparations when you can claim collaterals as a state? We are the **people** who are wronged, reparations can't be about us without us.

To the German government: You choose to ignore us, go ahead and side-line us, we are regrouping, you will have to deal with us when you are done with the Namibian government. My advice is, negotiate with us or face us later!!! We exist!

Our promise

- We shall not be silenced
- Our voices from the diaspora shall continue to shout until they are heard
- The bones of our ancestors will be accounted for
- Our ancestors will get the decent burials they deserve
- We shall multiply
- We are regrouping
- We are uniting

We shall overcome this struggle one day! Reparations can never be about us without us! We exist! We cannot be wished away!!!



Kundgebung in Berlin am Ende des Kongresses „Restorative justice after genocide. Our colonial present: Germany's Herero and Nama genocide“ vom 14.10. bis 15.10.2016.

Namibia nach 32 Jahren Unabhängigkeit – eine zivilgesellschaftliche Bestandsaufnahme

Uhuru Dempers

Director at Desk for Social Development of Social Responsibility of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN)

Thank you so much for the kind introduction.

I first got a glimpse of Frankfurt in 1989. I was 17 years old, a schoolboy then. I was on my way to the United Kingdom to participate in a one-month long campaign against Apartheid. Unfortunately, the only thing I remember about Frankfurt at that time is the very strong espresso coffee that I had at the airport. I still have difficulty to drink that coffee, even today.

I am a descendant of the survivors of genocide, both on my mother's and on my father's side. Part of my family now lives in Botswana.

I have been in Germany since the 3rd of September this year. The main purpose of my two-months-stay in Germany is to promote people-to-people relationships. The official agreement between the Namibian and German government is very important and we hope that it will one day be finalized. But I think that there may be more opportunities in the people-to-people relations and between institutions like churches – I come from a church background and I work for the church – but also in sports, culture, the academia, and entertainment many other relationships are possible.

This morning I flew here from Indonesia, where I was at a meeting of the World Council of Churches, a panel that was looking at some recommendations for the G20 meeting that will take place next month in Bali, in Indonesia. And I met the sisters and brothers from Latin America, from the Caribbean, other parts of Africa. And I was not only surprised but shocked by the extent of the damage that colonialism has caused to many parts of the world. And the consequences of that are still being felt until today in many parts of the world. In my own analysis, unfortunately, this colonial project is continuing in different forms: in the form of multinational companies which have no respect for the environment, no respect for the dignity of people, and are destroying the planet at a very, very fast pace. And therefore, we, the people, need to get together and fight against this new form of colonialism and imperialism.

I have been asked to talk about Namibia after 32 years of independence from a civil society perspective. And although it's very difficult, I will try to do it in the assigned 15 minutes of which maybe only ten are left now. I want to title my input as follows: What has happened in the past – we don't have the possibility to change, but the future is in our hands. The destiny is in our hands. And there are opportunities for us to define a better future, not only for those of us that are victims of colonialism, but for the whole world. And it's with that positive insight that I'm giving this this input.



Uhuru Dempers ist eine der bekanntesten Persönlichkeiten der namibischen Zivilgesellschaft. Als Student wurde er wegen Protest gegen das Apartheidsregime in Namibia verhaftet. Heute leitet er den Desk for Social Responsibility der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Namibia (ELCN). Er hat die Kampagne der namibischen Zivilgesellschaft zum Bedingungslosen Grundeinkommen mitgeprägt und koordiniert die Arbeitsgruppe namibischer zivilgesellschaftlicher Organisationen zur Landreform.

So, the first question is, how is Namibia today after more than hundreds of years of colonialism, first by Germany and then South Africa and the 32 years of independent government? Despite Namibia being a very wealthy country, I think per capita, Namibia is probably one of the richest countries in the world. But unfortunately, also the country where the majority of the poor people still live in poverty. The World Bank in January of this year said that 1.6 million of the 2.6 million Namibians are still living in poverty, and some of them in extreme poverty. Unfortunately, many children in Namibia will sleep tonight on an empty stomach. That's the reality of Namibia. The economic and financial crisis, the drought, and COVID 19 have all just made this situation that was already really bad, even more terrible. Still, 4000 white males own 70% of productive agricultural land in Namibia, 32 years after independence. Namibia is amongst the top three most unequal countries in the world, competing for the first place with countries like Brazil, South Africa and so on. Youth unemployment is a crisis. We might see the next Arab Spring type of protests coming up in Namibia.

This situation compared to pre-independence has not changed. I am not suggesting that nothing has improved in the past 32 years. The political freedoms to participate in the process of democracy and so on have changed. I can today stand and criticise our government without the fear of being put in jail. So there's a lot of change, also in terms of infrastructure and other things, there are some improvements that are taking place. But compared to the opportunities that we had to provide a decent life to many of our people, we have failed. We have failed them. 42% of our population lives in inhumane housing conditions, in the so-called informal settlements, or the squatters, as they are called.

Some of these problems are also a hangover from the colonial period. When we were negotiating our independence under the United Nations, there were five Western countries, including the government of West Germany, that forced our leaders that as part of this compromise they must agree that the private property of the descendants of Germans and other places in Namibia must be protected. So, in our constitution, we have entrenched a clause that says that the private property of those, for example, the 4000 white males that own the land, that land cannot be expropriated from them. And although we have made some legislation to change the situation, this has not been the case.

Next, I want to focus on the challenges within the Namibian-German relations. It was really sad that the most affected communities, especially the Nama and the Herero, had to take many years to convince our own Namibian government that the genocide was a special case and cannot just be treated as part of the general colonial project, that there was significant damage done. There are a lot of communities still suffering from generational trauma and still landless and having no livelihood. And therefore, we are still trying to look at opportunities to deal with this question decisively in Namibia.

There have been lost opportunities between Namibia and Germany to build new relationships. For example, the German parliament in 1989 said, Namibia was a special case. It's not normal like many other countries. It's a special case. And we are asking, why? Why a special case? Why is Nicaragua not a special case? Why is Zambia not a special case? Why Namibia? There was no understanding of this definition. Why would they say it's a special case? If the German government that time had said: „because of these relations, because of what we have done there and so on“, we would have been in a very different place.

The chancellor, Helmut Kohl, came to Namibia in September of 1995 to visit Namibia. It was the first time a German leader came to Namibia. Silence. No talk about the genocide. No talk about colonialism. Nothing. Just trade and business and culture and



those things. No discussions. If we had already discussed that time and our traditional leaders and so on would have been having demonstrations and spoke up: „what do you have to say? You need to apologize, Sir, for what you have done in Namibia!”

Regarding development cooperation between the two countries: Germany says it gives most of its development aid to Namibia, but this development aid doesn't take the particularly difficult situations of those communities that have been affected by the genocide and land dispossession that Germany has caused in Namibia into account. So, it's development aid for everyone, but there is no particular regard to the genocide. For example, the German government said: „Our money for development cooperation will not be used to buy land from those that own land and to give it to those that have been dispossessed.“ They said: „No, our money must not be used for that.“ Why? This land has been dispossessed from the indigenous population under German colonial rule and these people gained these privileges as a result!

We also had the apology of one of your ministers of development cooperation in 2004, when we were celebrating 100 years of the genocide. And when she came back from Namibia, the German government said: „No, that was a personal apology. It was not us. We don't know you. You were talking on your own behalf.“ That was another lost opportunity, where the German government could have taken that discussion forward and said: „Okay, let's now see what would be the modalities of taking this forward.“

In addition, there's not been a culture of remembrance promoted both in Namibia and Germany, although we could have. But we are very pleased by some of the things that are happening now in both our countries to decolonize. There is a small town called Swakopmund in Namibia. It's called „a little German town“, because a lot of the descendants of Germans are staying in this town. And if there's one place on this earth that needs to be decolonized, it's Swakopmund, because when you go there, you will think you are in some small city in Germany. Therefore, decolonialization is not only a German project, but also, we as Namibians need to deal with that.

I want to quickly give my views on the joint declaration between Namibia and Germany and then close with some suggestions for the way forward. I must say that what the joint declaration has come up with is not satisfactory. Again, it's another lost opportunity. However, when we look at where we were before this negotiation started, when there was denial from the German government, when there was even reluctance by our own government to recognize this, when you look at from where we are coming from, it is an achievement that we have reached this stage. I don't agree that that whole agreement and that whole process must be torn out and put in a rubbish bin. We must use that process to determine the weaknesses within this process. How do we reach the communities that have been excluded from this negotiation? How do we get them back on the table? Because I, for one, think, that we don't have the luxury of time, we don't have another ten years, twenty years to restart another negotiation from scratch, because the situation in the country is getting worse due to the economic crisis and such.

Namibians – and I'm talking about the government, I'm talking about the affected communities, I'm talking about Namibian citizens in general – need to work on unity amongst themselves. There is a lot of tension and lack of unity: tensions between the government and affected communities, tensions between and within the affected communities and so on. And therefore, if the Namibian communities are not united and don't form a powerful force to confront the mighty Germany, they are not going to achieve our goal as a country. I mean, if you look at other countries that have successfully negotiated this kind of deal with Germany... Like the government of Israel, there was unity between the government and the people, they were working together.

I want to also say that – and this is my concluding point – this agreement is very, very important. And we hope and pray that it gets finalised as soon as possible. We, as the people, Namibians and German citizens, need to look at opportunities for more collaboration and exchanges that allow us to talk to each other. I mean, just coming today to this meeting, I established two new contacts, one with the German community of the town of Mannheim that is holding some artefacts of a Nama community in Namibia and a second with someone that wrote a book about German-Namibian church relations. In the past months that I've been in Germany, I have encountered new initiatives on a daily basis that give hope that we as the people can establish more of this kind of collaboration. For example, two weeks ago, I participated in an exchange between the Freiburg University of Education and the University of Namibia, where we took a look at the school curriculum and university curriculum: How do we teach reconciliation, the genocide and the colonial history in history books in Namibia and in Germany?

I want to conclude by saying that we really appreciate you coming here tonight. I think, many of you and maybe all of you here, your families, didn't participate directly in the atrocities that have been committed by the German forces in Namibia and other places. But as citizens, you feel the responsibility to work with us, to make things right, and to help us with the difficulties that we are facing going forward. And I think we have an opportunity to establish and build special relations, so that we can create a better future jointly and also deal with the crisis that these new forms of colonialism through multinational companies, private interests and greed bring by destroying our planet and creating an exclusive society where only a few people live a wealthy life and the majority of citizens in the world are in misery. A better future is possible. Let's work together and achieve that. Thank you so much.



Land ist ein sensibles Thema. Als Erbe des Kolonialismus und des Genozids ist es immer noch sehr ungerecht verteilt.

Schlussworte

Abdoul Boukari **PLACE for Africa NGO (Political Laboratory of** **Afro-descendants Communities for Everyone)**

Thank you for the beautiful and inspiring inputs during Afrika neu denken 2022. I learned a lot through the exchange. The subject is very close to my heart. My name is Abdoul Boukari. I'm a member of the Black Academy team of the organization Place for Africa and an exchange program officer. It is with pleasure that I attend Afrika neu denken for the second time. I had the opportunity to come to Germany at the right time to have this privilege. I am from Benin, which is also my place of residence, and arrived here two days ago to assist my team at the Black Academy in Mannheim. I believe, that the experience of the Namibian process in the subject of restitution is very inspiring for us young people of West Africa, and is very important, since it's a very large topic that touches the financial, cultural, political, social, and many other fields.

Contemplating the example of my country, Benin (former: Dahomey), I would like to talk about the Mino women. Throughout history, Benin hasn't shown enough support towards the Mino women, also known under the name of 'amazons'. Unfortunately, the army of Mino women that coined the history of the country was exterminated in the fight against the French troops during the colonial time and the so called 'civilisation of Africa'. During the colonial war, Dahomey lost more than 5.000 women of the Mino women army. It's a human loss that has also led to a loss of feminist ideology in the African context. Today, when we see 20 % of women in Benin's army, we believe it is something exceptional, but in the past in Dahomey, it was common practice that the women played the most important part in the protection of the kingdom.

If we take a look at the case of the Congo in relation to exploitation and extermination through Belgium as a former colonial power, we, again, find a history that needs to be examined more closely.

We have a great historical baggage to review with the European countries, and Namibia is one example of this. We must support the cause of the Namibian activists, but also learn from their journey and from the challenges they faced, the advocacy done, ect. The call for reparations is not only about money, it's also about recognizing the atrocities of the past. Furthermore, it's a means of addressing Benin's story and that of other African nations, and celebrating our unknown heroes.

European countries must take responsibility as a symbol of recognition of past errors. It would showcase a good example of illustrating the new generation that humanity distances itself from the atrocities of the past.



Abdoul Boukari,
PLACE for Africa NGO