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PRESS RELEASE –
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Nama and Ovaherero people are resolute in their demand for restorative justice. No matter the direction Namibian government want to forced down on them. This has been proven once again when the Nama people gathered for their annual *Genocide Walk*, over the last weekend in Luderitz. An event to where Her Excellency the President Madam Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwa was invited and initially agreed to attend, only to rescind later, but delegated her Vice-President who was shortly before the event withdrawn also.

People not knowing about these withdrawals, gathered in anticipation in the main conference Auditorium of Luderitz. The hall was packed with youth, invited academics, PhD and Masters students from South Africa drawn to this event in the interest of its historical significance and the memorialization of the site. Also, people from different other regions of Namibia and South Africa attended the event. Gleaming with expectations, they all waited for the arrival and participation of the Namibian Lady President, to hear her discussing the future of the German genocide affected communities of Namibia and the diaspora, from her own perspective!

President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwa's name is lately been echoed a synonym for firm and pragmatic leadership, and it would have been an interesting mix of a pragmatist in the midst of idealist. Because for so many years the Nama people remained optimistic about a change condition to their own lives, so is everyone else who has gone through the advent of the German massacre. It is not surprising that GRN people shy away from community led initiative on genocide. They always seem reluctant or evasive, which further adds to the trust gap between the community and GRN as the so-called negotiators in good faith, always missing the opportunity to engage those at grassroots level?

After the information of the President's withdrawal and the reasons for it become known. Each Nama leader who spoke at the occasion reconfirmed the continuation of the fight until agreement for restorative justice is achieved. People attending the Genocide Walk talks in the main conference Auditorium, unquestionably observed the shifting of dynamics in the hall when the message regarding President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwa's refusal was shared. Obviously, her public relations officer will jump to come in her defence after reading this statement but it will be water under the bridge! Immediately the air in the building became thick, and the gleam of expectation faded, but was replaced by a hint of defiance, as the imminent critic against the position of the Nama Traditional Leaders was made known to audience. Understanding the complexities of international diplomacy, the expectation was that she would be the best person to unlock the prevailing stalemate.

About President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwa's U-turn

Having spend many years of her political career in international diplomacy: it was expected that she will welcome dialogue, and perhaps, in her own perspective, tell the Nama community what the future holds for the affected communities. Her change, after initially agreeing to come, created an atmosphere of palpable tension that lingered in the air, and become louder in every contribution of those that spoke on this subject. One would have thought that the decades spend in diplomatic service ought to have informed: Lady Ndaitwa, that the affected communities are ready for radical change, because the more the youth get mobilized the more the situation grew tense or rather weaponized. Bluntly ignoring the outcry of affected communities by using the claim of sovereignty is not the wisest advice to president.

All of the bilateral and diplomatic rigmarole applied by the two governments, in the attempt to rationalized their sham plan to subvert the Nama, and the Ovaherero people has been proven a senseless illegality. It is simple logic that there can never be justice in a truly restorative sense when affected communities like the Nama, Ovaherero, Damara, and San are not part of the defining stages of the ongoing negotiations. I am saying ongoing, because the legal process of this matter has just started. Counting on sovereignty by Namibian government will bring this government to embarrassing reality that sovereignty alone does not make this matter exclusively a political question. Because, participation rights are individual and collective human rights under customary international law. They are enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and further established in states' legal obligations towards its citizens. Thus, Namibia is obligated, whether or not, it has signed, endorsed, accent, or abstain. These are international legal instruments with mandatory modulation. That is why litigation was a logical step for the affected communities.

We in the south began to question the bona-fides of this government who seem to act in agency of the German government in Namibia. The particularity with which the Namibian government act in resolute resonance to German government's position, surprisingly taking this confrontational path apparently to appease the Germans because of bilateral relations!!!? Any reporter who attended the gathering in Luderitz, and not singling out the gravity demonstrated in the reflection by all and sundry who participated in the delivery of messages. Will be failing journalism in this country if not giving the nation the conclusive position presented by the Nama leadership. It was, indeed, an unmistakable declaration of stalemate, aimed at demanding a dialogue between the Namibian government and the affected communities to clear the way for better involvement of the Nama and Ovaherero leaders in the discussion for a truly restorative justice with authentic traditional leaders who so far was denied the opportunity to directly tell the German government where pain was inflicted. Not by people guess-working or second-hand delivery.

The determination in the voices of the leaders when they delivered their messages, short or long, was unmistakably conciliatory, but loud and clear in terms of their disagreement with position in respect of the manner by which government want to address the foundational issues of the Nama and other affected communities. Particularly the generational regressive economic conditions German advent has left with the Nama people. In fact, the essence of the messages was, that the intention is not the rejection of the Namibian government in toto, but the redefinition of the negotiations to face the inflicted and therefore the question of priority access, which to date is held in secrecy by Namibian government because of the divisive agenda that lingers in the minds of rulers since the beginning of the negotiations.

We are grateful the traditional leaders remained apolitical throughout their presentations and put across their views objectively with emphasis on strengthening the foundational conditions of the affected communities' without backing down on this position until resolve is found for the stalemate.

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