

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF HEROES' DAY**

WINDHOEK

AUGUST 26, 2021

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Fellow Compatriots,

Veterans of the Liberation Struggle,

Today, precisely 55 years ago, a sequence of events transpired that ensured that this historic date of August 26, will remain etched in the annals of our nation's history. Not only is this day significant in the context of the struggle for Namibian independence but it also represents a pivotal moment in the struggle for the liberation of the entire Southern African region.

A wise man once said, "When the will defies fear, when duty throws the gauntlet down to fate, when honor scorns to compromise with death - that is heroism."

On this day we recognize and celebrate our heroes and heroines, men and women, sons and daughters of the soil, who defied fear, whose sense of duty threw the gauntlet down to fate, whose honor did not compromise with death as they crossed many rivers of blood in order to deliver the promise of freedom and independence.

As a consequence of Apartheid South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia and brutal treatment of the Namibian people, notable Namibian leaders such as Chief Hosea Kutako via Reverend Michael Scott, Mburumba Kerina, Hans Beukes, Jariretundu Kozonguizi, Dr Sam Nujoma, Chief Hendrik Samuel Witbooi, Hendrik Witbooi, Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, and Simon Kaukungua

commenced the process of petitioning and lobbying the international community, to let them know of the plight of the Namibian people. In this context, also several SWAPO members appeared before the Trusteeship Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. Although this petitioning created the necessary awareness and garnered the support of the world, they could not force South Africa to cease its illegal occupation and oppression.

However, in 1966 the United Nations General Assembly revoked South Africa's mandate to govern Namibia, placing it under direct UN administration, but South Africa refused to recognize this resolution. They were emboldened by the fact that Resolution after Resolution were being triple vetoed by the Western Three in the Security Council, namely, France, UK and USA, in support of the apartheid regime.

The continued existence of the Mandate and the failure of South Africa to adhere to its duties and performance as mandatory thereunder, was taken to the International Court of Justice by Ethiopia and Liberia in November 1960.

On July 18, 1966, the International Court of Justice threw out the case, dismissing it due to a technicality, stating that Liberia and Ethiopia did not have locus standi, in other words, they did not have material interest to bring the case before the Court. Based on that technicality the International Court of Justice did not deal with the merits of the case and failed to rule on the

legality of Apartheid South Africa's occupation of Namibia. Thus, any hopes for peaceful resolution and international justice were dashed. SWAPO therefore moved swiftly to launch the war for liberation.

SWAPO prepared for armed resistance and through its armed wing, the South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA) later the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), began to infiltrate the north of Namibia to establish training camps. One of these camps was Omugulugombashe, where PLAN intended to train Namibian fighters to partake in the armed struggle. This is the historic location where our fighters encountered the enemy and fought the 1st historic battle of the Namibian Liberation Struggle on August 26, 1966, at Omugulugwombashe in the Omusati Region, following an attack by the Apartheid South African Defence and Security Forces. This significant moment represented a point of no return and thus, the armed struggle for our independence, commenced in earnest.

The resoluteness of our heroes and heroines during the dark days of the struggle that ensued, has contributed immensely to advancing the cause of freedom, self-rule, sovereignty and independence. In a sense, the achievements that our brave fighters managed on the battlefields, have in their unique way formed part of the road map for our national development. Without fundamental human rights, the pursuit of development would not be possible and that is why the Liberation Struggle was an absolute necessity, for as the Cuban revolutionary and poet José Martí said, "Rights are to be taken, not requested; seized, not begged for." Through armed

struggle, Namibians decided not to request for their rights but to take them; not to beg for their rights but to seize them.

Fellow Namibians,

It has been said that, "The hero draws inspiration from the virtue of his ancestors." Indeed, our heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle drew inspiration from the virtue of the likes of Kaptein Hendrik Witbooi, Kaptein Jacob Marengo, Chief Hosea Kutako, Chief Kahimemua Nguvauva, Chief Samuel Maharero, Chief Nehale Iya Mpingana, Chief Adolf Gariseb, Chief Mandume ya Ndemufayo, Chief Ipumbu ya Tshilongo, Hompa Nyangana WaMukuve, Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga, Brendon Simbwaye and Mama Kakurukaze Mungunda just to name a few.

Therefore, as we celebrate the selfless courage of our brave fighters of the liberation struggle, let us commit ourselves to building on their remarkable legacy just as they continued the legacy of those Namibians who had stood up to Imperial Germany's colonial rule.

Today, all Namibians enjoy the right to vote, the right of workers to a just wage and to organize in Trade Unions, freedom of speech and association, freedom of movement, protection of human rights and all other rights enshrined in our Constitution. This is our inheritance from those who embodied unquestionable patriotism, those who put country before self, those who were prepared to lose their lives so that others could live as free

human beings and those who displayed a will of steel in the face of brutal oppression.

Our National Heroes have collectively provided the example and inspiration which has formed the bedrock upon which we have built the Namibian House. It is for this reason that we must never lay to waste what they valiantly fought for. The best way to honour these remarkable patriots is to emulate the qualities that define them. Let us embody patriotism and develop within us, an altruistic character whereby we show greater concern for the wellbeing of others.

In this respect, we have launched the narrative of One Namibia, One Nation where we talk of the Namibian House, whose walls consists of the bricks representing our various tribes/ethnic groups and races, however once plastered and painted with the colors of the Namibian flag, the individual bricks are not identifiable and therefore the various bricks have been combined into one wall and thus represent a unified nation. This is the new narrative we have started, in order to ensure that we consolidate the solid foundations that have been laid by the sons and daughters of our Liberation Struggle.

Fellow Namibians,

As we commemorate the immeasurable sacrifices of our heroes and heroines, we also reflect on our current struggle against the invisible enemy,

COVID-19. I must admit, that over the past several months, almost every week, I have had to confer either an official, state or heroes funeral for a veteran of our Liberation Struggle. Sometimes, I have conferred multiple funerals in one week. This is something we have never seen before. It has been a heart-wrenching experience, writing messages of condolences to spouses and families of deceased veterans. It has been painful to see so many of our veterans lost their lives, and along with them, we have lost a wealth of experience, expertise and stories that could enrich our history and preserve the memory of our struggle for independence.

Indeed, Namibia has suffered untold losses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. You may recall that during my 32nd COVID-19 Public briefing on July 30, 2021, I stressed the fact that our battle with COVID-19 during past few months, represents a somber time in our nation's history. The human cost our nation has suffered is almost unfathomable. The ever-present specter of death within our communities has shaken the psyche of our people.

We have lost mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, children, war veterans, spiritual leaders, traditional leaders, business, public and community personalities. Our country has lost some of its best brains, productive citizens and nation-builders. We are losing a generation of elders, who possess political, cultural, ancestral, indigenous knowledge and wisdom. A vacuum has been left by COVID-19 which we must all now endeavor to fill, as we heal from this devastating catastrophe. As we do so, let us draw inspiration

from our heroes of the liberation struggle and emulate their passion, courage, patriotism and gallantry.

At this juncture, I wish to honour our modern-day heroes, those who have held the frontline in our war against COVID-19. I speak of our courageous Health Care Workers, Law Enforcement Agencies and public officials, who since the onset of the coronavirus, have risked their lives daily on the frontlines of this deadly pandemic. Your sacrifices are appreciated, your sacrifices are invaluable, your sacrifices represent a bulwark which continues to safeguard the territorial integrity and future of the Republic of Namibia. Despite the challenges that you face, you continue to work for the well-being of our citizens, the protection of our communities, and the advancement of our nation. Namibia salutes your patriotism, commitment and sacrifice.

Fellow Namibians,

In the face of difficulties, I am confident that the citizens of this great country; the country known as the Land of the Brave, can overcome the challenges we face by following the valiant example of those whose blood waters our freedom. Let us remember that in times of difficulties, heroes rise to the fore. Therefore, let us recapture the courage and determination of our heroes, let us draw inspiration from their legendary and immortalized exploits, let us emulate their unwavering will and commitment towards nation building. Today, let us all vow to become heroes in our households, in our communities, in our respective fields of employment. Let us use our

collective talents to build a more resilient Namibia, a more united Namibia and a Namibia that will rise to the highest heights of economic freedom and prosperity.

May God bless you all, and may God bless the Republic of Namibia.

Long live the heroes and heroines of our Liberation Struggle.

I thank you.