

[Ovaherero/Ovambanderu Genocide Committee presentation at the annual Okahandja Commemoration - August 25, 2005 - Okahandja](#) presented by Veraa Katuuo

The German Government:

The time has come for the German Bundestag, parliament, to bring closure to the heinous act of atrocities committed against the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu people by passing a resolution that recognizes the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu genocide and to formally apologize for this crime against humanity.

The Ovaherero genocide was not happenstance of German colonial engagement in Namibia. The Ovaherero genocide was well planned and executed with the seal of approval of the imperial German government of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and brutally carried out by the ruthless Lieutenant-General Lothar von Trotha.

German settlers with the support of *Schutztruppe*, continued to claim more land—pushing the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu into destitution. The settlers were intent on provoking a full-blown war and agitated for the total annihilation of the Ovaherero, so that they can gain possession of the land and the cattle which the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu had in abundance.

Their wishes were realized with the signing of the infamous extermination order by General Lothar von Trotha. "I, the great general of the German troops, send this letter to the Herero people... All Herero must leave this land... Any Herero found within the German borders with or without a gun, with or without cattle, will be shot. I shall no longer receive any women or children; I will drive them back to their people. I will shoot them. This is my decision for the Herero people."

Tens of thousands of men, women, and children died of thirst and starvation in the Kalahari as the remaining water holes dried up or were poisoned by pursuing German troops.

The defeated survivors were placed in concentration camps where suffering and death was the norm. Many women were raped and forced to perform sexual services for German soldiers, which led to a high incidence of syphilis, gonorrhea, and other sexually transmitted diseases in the camps — which had consequences for Ovaherero/Ovambanderu women's fertility for some generations.

Camp prisoners were made into human subjects for various laboratory experiments designed to confirm the racial inferiority of black peoples.

By the end of that vicious extermination campaign more than 80% of the Ovaherero were exterminated. Whereas around 1894, the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu made up approximately 1/3 of the Namibian population, today they constitute less than 10% of the Namibian population.

The war of extermination killed the Ovaherero nation for years to come. Due to the rape, the abuses and diseases, today the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu have one of the lowest fertility rates in Namibia.

100 years after the war of extermination, the OvaOvaherero/Ovambanderu are still cramped in reservations.

The United Nations Whitaker Report in 1985 recognized the extermination of the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu people as genocide.

The German/Ovaherero War International Conference held in Bremen, Germany, October 2004, at which the German government and the Namibian government were officially represented, recognized the extermination of the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu as genocide. We are appealing to the moral conscious of the German nation to face its painful past, and to ask the German political establishment to rectify the historical wrong against the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu people. The time is now for Germany to enter into meaningful negotiation with the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu people.

As the perpetrator of crimes against humanity, Germany does not have the right to pick and choose which Ovaherero/Ovambanderu leaders to talk to. The time has come for Germany to stop by-passing the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu leadership. Germany must stop practicing the divide and rule charade. It will not work.

The Namibian Government:

We welcome the Namibian government as a facilitator of the process between the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu and the German government of the issue of genocide and reparations. However, we believe that the victims must take a lead in deliberations with Germany because the resolution and restitution must be borne from the reconciliation of the German nation and the victims.

We also call on the Namibian Parliament to pass a resolution recognizing the genocide of the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu and calling for a formal apology and reparations from Germany. Such a resolution will honor the victims of the genocide and help restore their dignity, and will further strengthen the case for reparations. It is also our view that reparations will benefit the entire Namibian society.

We believe it is of paramount importance that our government gets involved and consistently sends official representatives to all functions that are connected with the issue of the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu genocide, and their just demands for reparations.

We note with satisfaction that His Excellency Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, sent the Honorable Minister John Pandeni to represent him at the 109th remembrance of the death of Kahimemua Hijakungairi Nguvauva in Okahandja earlier this year. We applaud this statesmanlike gesture.

The community

We pay tribute to the men and women who have dedicated themselves to the just resolution of the genocide issue. We commend our leadership for their steadfastness and their wisdom in pursuing this matter.

We understand and expect that on some occasions, we may differ amongst ourselves in terms of specific strategies and activities, and that is healthy to have different ideas and to debate various options and strategies. At the same, we believe there are certain guiding principles that are sacred and cannot be compromised:

- a) A moral and lasting resolution must include a clear and unequivocal recognition of the genocide by Germany. Any agreement that does not include this recognition dishonors those who lost lives, betrays our people and does great disservice to other people in the world who have been victimized by acts of genocide.
- b) A just and lasting resolution must be based on genuine and true acceptance by the entire Ovaherero/Ovambanderu community. These are weighty issues and the consequences are great for our people. It is imperative that the whole community is mobilized and engaged.

We call on the Lutheran Church to work with other denominations including the African Church, and Oruano to support the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu communities in their quest for justice and reparations from Germany.

While the church played a positive role in the later phase of the liberation of Namibia, the church role and position regarding the Ovaherero genocide of 1904, was not helpful to our people. We note that “the Rhenish Missionary Society hoisted the flag of Prussia over their establishment amongst the Ovaherero/Ovambanderus in 1864 and promptly asked for protection” from Germany.

Given this background, one would expect the Lutheran Church to be careful not to be seen as a partner in Germany’s refusal to acknowledge the Ovaherero genocide and to pay reparations. The church should be on record as having explicitly recognized the Ovaherero genocide by Germany.

We call on the Lutheran church to use its contacts in Germany to facilitate dialogue among the Germans and the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu people and their leaders. The appropriate role of the church is to provide spiritual and moral support, and not to enter into negotiations with the Germany on behalf of the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu people.

We, ozondekurona, who hail from the current Namibian political spectrum, and from across Namibia, pledge our support to *otjiuana*. We are united in one goal only, and that is the goal of the genocide of the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu and reparations. It may take hundred years to redress the wrong suffered by the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu, but we shall never, ever forget the ultimate sacrifice of our forefathers. We shall succeed.

We ask that you sign the petition on the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu genocide being distributed by the Otjitiro Otjindjandja Committee. Please do not leave Okahandja without signing your name today. It is imperative that you sign.
Thank you very much.