

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
31ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CASSINGA MASSACRE**

04 MAY 2009

OKAHANDJA

**Check Against Delivery*

Director of Ceremonies
Fellow Namibians and Friends
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The morning of the 4th of May 1978 is a day that many of our compatriots will remember with anguish. It is a day when defenseless women and children were subjected to a dastardly attack by the occupational forces of the apartheid colonial regime. Today marks the 31st Anniversary of the Cassinga Massacre, one of the most horrific acts of violence and brutality in Namibia's history of resistance against colonial occupation and apartheid oppression.

Shall we rise and observe a minute of silence in honour of our fallen compatriots - thank you.

Today, we remember the selfless sacrifices made by thousands of Namibian men and women. Namibia's anti-colonial resistance is punctuated by inhumane atrocities committed against our people. Institutionalized oppression and barbaric armed attacks against civilian targets were hallmarks of the colonial response to our yearning for freedom and self-determination. But the will, determination and tenacity of our people to fight for their rights proved invincible for the enemies of freedom and equality. Namibia is today free and independent, never again to be subjected to foreign colonial domination.

Today, we honour the gallant sons and daughters of Namibia who lost their lives during the Cassinga Massacre, 31 years ago. At the same time, we also remember other heroes and heroines of our revolution who laid down their lives and shed their precious blood for our freedom and independence on the battle front and at other places.

In addition to Cassinga, we recall Oshatotwa, Shantuhu, Singalamwe, Oshikuku, Ondeshifiilwa, Oshakati, and other places inside and outside Namibia where our people sacrificed their lives for the noble cause of national liberation. We equally recall the concentration camps on Shark Island and those near Swakopmund and, indeed, the execution of our Herero and Nama compatriots following the extermination orders by German colonial oppressors.

Many of the survivors of the Cassinga Massacre are amongst us today. We should lend them our ears if they want to talk and share their experiences with us about the events of that fateful day.

The Cassinga Massacre exposed the ruthlessness of the enemy to the entire world. It also emboldened SWAPO to further intensify the liberation struggle at all fronts.

An instance of brutality, meant to break the spirit of the liberation struggle, provided a new impetus for the fight against colonial subjugation. The attack revealed how ruthless the apartheid regime could be. It allowed the opening up of diplomatic and military fronts for us, which further accelerated our march towards freedom and self-determination.

The freedom and independence we enjoy today was made possible by the selfless sacrifices of patriotic Namibians who stood firm in the face of danger and fought with determination. We will never forget their sacrifices and their bravery, for their blood waters our freedom.

It is now our national duty to work with resolve to ensure that the gains of freedom and democracy which we have enjoyed since 21st March 1990 are consolidated. This is the only way we will enable every Namibian to benefit from the gains of our independence.

The selfless sacrifices of our heroes and heroines who died at Cassinga and other places must inspire us as we work to build a peaceful and prosperous society. They must also inspire us to continue the fight for social justice and to bring an end to all forms of discrimination and inequality in all spheres of our lives. Let us honour the martyrs and survivors of the Cassinga Massacre by rededicating ourselves to nation building and national reconciliation.

In this manner, we will bear historic testimony that their deaths and their blood will forever be honoured by the present and future generations of Namibians.

Long Live the memories of the Martyrs and Survivors of the Cassinga Massacre!

Long Live the Republic of Namibia!

I thank you.