

# REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBAMBA, PRESIDENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
COMMEMORATION OF THE HEROES DAY**

**26 AUGUST 2009**

**OMUGULUGWOMBASHE  
OMUSATI REGION**

*\*Check Against Delivery*

Director of Ceremonies  
Comrade Sam Shafishuna Nujoma, Founding Father of the Namibian Nation  
Rt. Honourable Nahas Angula, Prime Minister  
Honourable Dr. Libertine Amathila, Deputy Prime Minister  
Honourable Theo-Ben Gurirab, Speaker of the National Assembly  
Honourable Asser Kapere, Chairperson of the National Council  
Honourable Peter Shivute, Chief Justice  
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers  
Honourable Members of Parliament  
Honourable Regional and Local Authority Councillors  
Honourable Traditional Leaders  
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Fellow Namibians,

May I request all of you to rise and observe a minute of silence in honour and remembrance of our heroes and heroines who sacrificed their lives and shed their precious blood for Namibia's freedom and independence. Their blood waters our freedom.

<i>Minute of silence observed</i>
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I thank you.

We are gathered here at this cherished shrine to commemorate one of the most important and memorable days in the annals of the history of our nation.

It was on this day, 43 years ago, that the Namibian people under the leadership of SWAPO, launched the armed liberation struggle with the aim of dislodging the forces of colonial occupation from our motherland. Following the intransigence of the apartheid colonial regime of South Africa and its refusal to comply with the Resolutions of the United Nations, our national liberation movement SWAPO, resolved to launch the armed liberation struggle and dispatched the brave cadres of the South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA), the forerunner of the Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia, (PLAN). The armed unit of SWALA cadres that came to Namibia, under the command of one of the icons of our liberation struggle, Col John ya Otto Nankudhu, fired the first shots to commence our armed liberation struggle here at Omugulu GwOmbashe on 26 August 1966.

Director of Ceremonies,

The rich history which culminated in the battle of Omugulu Gwombashe 43 years ago, must be told.

It must be told so that the current and future generations of Namibians can appreciate the hardship and the dedication of their countrymen and women who committed their lives to the achievement of freedom, nationhood and sovereignty of our nation.

This rich history must be told so that we can honour those who believed and lived by the belief that slavery and death are one and the same thing. Indeed, this rich history must be told so that the Namibian people can proudly and patriotically say that we successfully took up and carried forward the mantle of leadership from our forebearers who initiated the anti-colonial struggle against the colonial forces of occupation. I have in mind our heroes and heroines such as Hendrik Witbooi, Samuel Maharero, Nicodemus Kahimemwa, Mandume ya Ndemufayo, Ipumbu ya Shilongo, Jakob Marengo, Nehale IyaMpingana and others.

It is for these reasons that my address to the nation on Heroes Day this year will take a different format. I feel that it is proper and fitting to allow the nation to hear from some of the patriots who were directly involved in the historical events as they unfolded during those crucial years preceding the Battle of Omugulu Gwombashe.

Thus, today, the nation will not only hear from me as President of the Republic, you will also hear from other icons of our national liberation struggle who will give personal accounts of the significant events leading up to the Battle of Omugulu Gwombashe.

I am talking about the individuals who were involved in the prelude to that historic battle, the battle itself and those who played a crucial role during its aftermath. In this regard, I have invited the patriots who were in senior leadership positions and did not retreat from the historical duty of providing leadership when leadership was called for during our struggle for liberation. These are Comrade Sam Shafishuna Nujoma, Comrade Andimba Toivo ya Toivo and Comrade Col John ya Otto Nankudhu.

Comrade Sam Shafishuna Nujoma will share with us his experiences as he led SWAPO during this crucial time. He will also give accounts on strategies that SWAPO adopted during that time to establish and train an armed wing of SWAPO to carry out the armed liberation struggle, the procurement of armaments, the mobilisation of the international community and the logistics of launching the armed liberation struggle in 1966. After this, I will inform the nation about the assignments that the SWAPO leadership placed on me to mobilize support for our liberation struggle.

My remarks will be followed by Comrade Andimba Toivo ya Toivo to reflect on the role of the internal leadership of SWAPO. He will inform the nation how the internal leadership of SWAPO was tasked to receive the cadres of SWALA who were sent to Namibia to launch the armed liberation struggle.

After him, Col John ya Otto Nankudhu who commanded the armed unit of SWALA that launched the armed liberation struggle here at Omugulu GwOmbashe will narrate his experiences on that historic day. This is necessary to provide a historical context as we commemorate this important day.

Comrade Nujoma, I call upon you to come to the podium.

*After Comrade Nujoma's statement:*

Director of Ceremonies  
Fellow Namibians,

I would like to thank you Comrade Nujoma for the informative historical perspective that you have just given to our nation on this important day. As I indicated earlier, I will now talk about some of the important assignments given to me by the SWAPO leadership during that crucial time leading up to the launch of our liberation struggle.

*After Comrade President Pohamba's remarks:*

I now have the pleasure to call upon Comrade Andimba Toivo ya Toivo to share with us his experiences during those days as someone who was tasked to assist the newly trained fighters once they arrived inside the country.

*After Comrade ya Toivo's remarks:*

I thank Comrade ya Toivo for his insightful recollections about the role that the internal leadership of SWAPO played during those difficult years. This confirms once again the strategy of our liberation movement to work on multiple fronts in mobilising our people for the cause of freedom. We worked in unity both within and outside Namibia to achieve the common objective of bringing to an end the colonial occupation of our motherland by any means necessary under the banner of One Namibia, One Nation. Let the youth of our nation learn from these enduring values of unity of purpose.

I now have the pleasure to call upon Comrade Col John ya Otto Nankudhu as the first commander of the unit that launched the armed liberation struggle to share his experience of the events leading up to the Battle of Omugulu Gwombashe.

*After Comrade John ya Otto Nankudhu's remarks:*

Director of Ceremonies  
Fellow Namibians,

I take this opportunity to also thank Col. Nankudhu for sharing with us those priceless memories. As it stands inscribed on this shrine, at Omungulu Gwombase "*Their aim was freedom*". That is what motivated the brave men such as John ya Otto Nankudhu and his comrades-in-arms to travel long distances across rivers, valleys and swamps and to launch Namibia's armed liberation struggle at Omugulu Gwombashe. The Namibian people will never forget their bravery and gallantry in our fight for nationhood and liberty.

What we have heard here today is the contemporary portion of the glorious history of anti-colonial resistance that was started by the brave sons and daughters of this soil including Hendrik Witbooi, Samuel Maharero, Mandume ya Ndemufayo, Nehale IyaMpingana, Jakob Marengo, Ipumbu ya Shilongo and many others.

We equally pay homage to the bravery of other Namibians who confronted the apartheid machinery and even without hesitation put their lives and their safety at risk for the sake of our freedom. We remember Kakurukaze Mungunda, Putuse Appolus, Brendan Simbwaye, Tobias Hainyeko, Peter Nanyemba, Greenwell Matongo, Helao Nafidi and many others. The blood of these brave sons and daughters of Namibia waters our freedom. Glory to the Heroes and Heroines of Namibia.

On an occasion such as this one, we do not only look at the past and the glorious of our nation, we also cast our eyes on the horizon and look to the future. The future of our country and all here people. With the attainment of independence, we took destiny into our own hands and embarked upon a new struggle, namely, the struggle for socio-economic development of our country and improvement of the living conditions of all of our people.

In order to achieve these goals, we must mobilize all Namibians to work as members of one team regardless of their race, gender, status in society or ethnic origin. We were able to attain freedom and independence because we stood together as one.

As we move forward to achieve our national development goals and Vision 2030, we must join hands to build our country and make it a place that all Namibians are proud to call their home.

In the same vein, we must promote the Policy of National Reconciliation as an effective mechanism to forge stronger national unity and mutual understanding. This is the foundation upon which we can build durable socio-economic and political stability. It is the solid rock upon, which we can build a brighter future for all Namibians.

Director of Ceremonies,

I have often said that political independence will be meaningless if it is not accompanied by meaningful socio-economic benefits for our citizens. Towards this end, our Government has since independence in 1990, pursued policies and implemented programmes aimed at addressing the socio-economic needs of our people. These include the strengthening of our education sector, the provision of healthcare, the expansion of the water supply infrastructure, the provision of affordable housing to our people, rural electrification, and the provision of assistance to our senior citizens, people with disabilities, orphans and vulnerable children as well as the veterans of our liberation struggle. These social safety nets have been instrumental in helping our people to cope with the day-to-day challenges of meeting their basic needs.

Our Government has also taken strategic and deliberate decisions to ensure that our physical and communication infrastructures are expanded and remain in a good state of repair. Today, Namibia has world class infrastructure that are facilitating vibrant trade and commercial activities. We have expanded our roads, railways and power supply networks. We have also developed our harbours in order to accommodate larger cargo vessels. These investments have yielded positive outcomes including increased trade and the attraction of foreign direct investment into Namibia.

The empowerment of our communities is also high on the agenda. In this regard, strategies have been put in place to enable communities to benefit from our natural resources. One such strategy is the conservancy programme that has yielded many benefits to conservancy members. In addition, community projects to promote aquaculture and the cultivation of mushrooms have been embarked upon, while the Green Scheme is now gaining momentum. The aim is to promote both food security and enable communities to generate income.

Director of Ceremonies,

The youth are the future leaders of our country. They are the workers, planners and managers of tomorrow. Hence, specific focus has been placed on the development of our youth to ensure that they can contribute effectively to the development of their country. The National Youth Service Programme has been strengthened to train more young people and provide them with skills and competencies, which are indispensable to the modern economy.

Many rural communities have historically been excluded from the mainstream of our society and have endured many hardships. This state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. Steps have, therefore, been taken to provide support to the San, Ovaherero and other groups. These included the provision of housing, the establishment of various income generating projects, building of schools and clinics, resettlement of communities on sustainable land as well as assistance for San youth to enroll at tertiary education institutions. I reflect on these issues today on this occasion of Heroes Day because, they are the reasons why our heroes and heroines gave their lives for.

They are the reason why thousands of Namibians left their motherland to join the liberation struggle, thereby forming a united front in search of liberty. They are reasons why those who fought on the home front never relented in their convictions to fight for what is right and resisted the tyranny of apartheid with all their might. Yes, it is for these reasons why we believe that it is just, fair and right for all citizens to enjoy the fruits of the independence of our motherland Namibia.

We have achieved freedom and independence for our country but must work to achieve the economic emancipation of our people. Our Government has made enormous progress with the implementation of socio-economic development programmes since independence. The Namibian people have witnessed major developments on the social, economic, infrastructure and on governance levels during the last 19 years of our independence.

The basic amenities such as electricity and shelter are now available in previously neglected communities across the country. Potable water is now available to most households and communities. People have access to schools, hospitals, roads, telecommunications networks, and many other infrastructures that have improved their living standards significantly.

However, more needs to be done so that Namibia and her people can reach their full potential. Our Government is conscious of the need for improvement in service delivery especially to our people in rural areas. I assure you that we will do more. We are committed to provide services to all our people, especially in those areas where such services are not currently available.

Fellow Namibians,

The presence of peace and stability is a crucial ingredient for development, where there is no peace there can be no development. Thus, we should all work together to preserve peace and stability in our country. A free, stable and peaceful society will enable our people to achieve their full potential.

I call on the whole nation to continue to cherish the peace and stability that we have enjoyed over the years. This is especially important as our nation prepares for the Presidential and National Assembly Elections in November this year. This year, the born free generation is standing at a crucial moment in history as they will exercise their democratic right to vote for the first time. They should do this with the appreciation of the sacrifices of our heroes and heroines who brought about freedom and independence. They must recognise that the freedom and peace that they enjoy in a free and independent Namibia would not have been possible without such sacrifices.

This event should remind our nation about the long and difficult journey that our people have walked towards the achievement of our nationhood. It calls upon us as Namibians to honour the bravery and gallantry of our countrymen and women who worked against the odds and difficult circumstances to achieve freedom.

Therefore, on this day, we pay homage to all the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives during the struggle for our independence. We salute those who were injured, maimed and tortured by the reactionary forces of apartheid. We must do this because it is the right thing to do.

We must proclaim without hesitation that their sacrifices were not in vain. The hardships and suffering that they endured were crowned by the final victory that we celebrated on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1990, when Namibia joined the community of nations as a free and independent Republic.

As a product of international solidarity, we will remain indebted to the progressive countries, countries, organizations and peoples of the world who stood by us during our greatest hour of need. This includes the frontline states any other nations that provided us with valuable material, military and financial support.

Namibia is now free and free forever. The future destiny of our country is in our own hands. We will work harder to make Namibia a winning nation. We will do our best to secure a brighter future for our children and for the future generations. This we will do in honour of those who made the supreme sacrifices for Namibia's freedom.

We will do this to honour their legacy of bravery and gallantry because as we sing in our National Anthem "*their blood waters our freedom*". They gave their lives and shed their precious blood so that all Namibians can live in peace and security; free from hunger and poverty, and secure in the knowledge that there is a brighter tomorrow. It is our duty to honour this legacy by making Namibia the best that she can be. Let us all do our part to honour this historic and sacred legacy.

Once again, I would like to thank the three stalwards, for they are indeed stalwarts of our liberation struggle who shared their insights with the nation today. Cde Sam Nujoma, Cde ya Toivo and Col Nankudhu, thank you for your service to the people of Namibia. I take this opportunity to wish all our people a memorable Heroes Day. A day during, which we should all reflect on our history and rededicate yourselves to honour the sacrifices of our fallen heroes and heroines. A day on which we all re-commit ourselves to national reconciliation and development. Indeed a day on which we take to heart the lessons of history as we chart the way towards the future, towards Vision 2030 and beyond.

Glory to the memories of our Heroes and Heroines!  
Long Live the Republic of Namibia!

I thank you.