

# REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR.  
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA, PRESIDENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,  
DURING THE 35<sup>TH</sup> COMMEMORATION  
OF CASSINGA DAY.**

**4<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2013**

**WINDHOEK**

*\*Check Against Delivery*

**Director of Ceremonies,  
Your Excellency, Dr. Sam S. Nujoma,  
Founding President and Father of the  
Namibian Nation;  
Honourable Deputy Prime Minister,  
Honourable Speaker of the National  
Assembly,  
Honourable Chairperson of the National  
Council,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Honourable Members of Parliament;  
Honourable Governor of the Khomas Region;  
Your Excellencies, Members of the  
Diplomatic Corps;  
Your Worship, the Mayor of Windhoek;  
Honourable Regional and Local Authority  
Councillors;  
Distinguished Service Chiefs;  
Distinguished Traditional, Religious and  
Community Leaders;  
Veterans of the National Liberation Struggle,  
Survivors of the Cassinga Massacre and other**

**Atrocities of apartheid colonialism,  
Members of the Media;  
Dear Compatriots,**

**May I request all of you to rise and observe a minute of silence in honour of our fallen heroes and heroines. [I thank you].**

**We are gathered here today to remember the infamous and brutal attack on the Cassinga Refugee Settlement in southern Angola. The Settlement served as a Reception Center for Namibian refugees who left the country of their birth to escape the brutality and tyranny of apartheid colonialism. Although many years have passed, our hearts remain filled with vivid memories of the loss of lives, injuries, as well as the physical and emotional trauma suffered by our people on that fateful day.**

**On this day, we remember and pay homage to our forebearers who fought heroic wars of resistance against German colonial occupation in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.**

**We remember the fallen cadres of the Peoples' Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and other freedom fighters who lost their lives and shed their blood on the battlefield and at places such as Epinga, Oshikuku, Oshakati and Ondeshifiilwa; Oshaatotwa and Vietnam in Zambia and Angola respectively, and at other locations.**

**We also remember other freedom fighters who lost their lives and endured suffering because of the atrocities and cruelty perpetrated against our people by the apartheid regime.**

**Some of our Comrades lie in unmarked graves in the forests and valleys of southern Africa. We honour and remember them all for their patriotism and bravery. They fought without fear and gave their lives to break the chains of oppression and colonialism.**

**On behalf of the nation, I would like to pay special homage to all Namibians who survived the attacks and atrocities committed by the troops of imperial Germany and the repressive machinery of apartheid during our long history of resistance.**

**These are the living monuments of our national liberation struggle. Their suffering and experiences must remain constant reminders to us all that the freedom and independence of our country, were achieved through a long and bitter struggle.**

**Therefore, our entire nation must honour their selfless contributions and their sacrifices.**

**Over the years, a lot has been said and written about the Cassinga Massacre. Unfortunately, some of what has been written is based on distorted information distributed by the propaganda machinery of apartheid at that time, with the aim of deceiving the international community and vilifying and discrediting SWAPO, the National Liberation Movement, that spearheaded the struggle for national independence.**

**I would, therefore, like to say a few words about Cassinga Refugee Settlement. The Settlement was given to SWAPO, as one of the gestures of solidarity and generosity by the Government and people of the sister Republic of Angola.**

**The Namibian people will remain forever grateful to our Angolan brothers and sisters for assisting us in a very substantial manner, notwithstanding the danger of repeated acts of aggression and atrocities perpetrated by the apartheid regime against the Republic of Angola.**

**Because of its location, the Cassinga Settlement was used mainly as a Reception Centre to receive and register our people, who were leaving Namibia to join the national liberation struggle, under the leadership of SWAPO.**

**The Camp was organized and laid out in a manner that facilitated orderly day-to-day administration. For example, schooling classes were organized for the young people and there was a functioning health system consisting of nurses and paramedics.**

**There were also mechanical workshops, food supply stores and other logistical facilities. Gardening projects were established to produce food and to provide the residents with a sense of normalcy under very difficult circumstances.**

**When the brutal attack against Cassinga by the apartheid troops commenced in the morning hours of that fateful day, the majority of the Centre's residents were gathered at the Assembly Area, waiting to receive instructions and deployment orders for their daily activities. Such was the life in a Refugee Settlement. The survivors of Cassinga, many of whom are still alive and living in different parts of the country today, can attest to these facts.**

**The settlement had a total population of just over 3, 000 people. A large number of them were children under fourteen years of age.**

**In the aftermath of the attack, hundreds of our people were killed and many more were injured and maimed. These facts were verified by representatives of the United Nations, who visited Cassinga after the attack. On the same day, the Vietnam Settlement, which was situated in Ombadja Area in southern Angola, was also attacked and many Namibian refugees killed and others were captured by the apartheid troops.**

**In addition to those who lost their lives and those who sustained injuries, dozens of our people were captured and taken as prisoners and brought back to Namibia, where they endured many years of imprisonment and torture at various detention centres. The Cassinga Massacre was one of the most brutal single attacks in the history of our liberation struggle, which we shall never forget.**

**Director of Ceremonies,**

**Today, we remember and honour the glorious history and the bravery of our people. We draw inspiration from their courageous deeds and selfless sacrifices as we face the future and build a peaceful and better society for all our people. We are proud that, although the national struggle was long and bitter, our people stood together in unity until final victory was achieved.**

**Director of Ceremonies,**

**The history of Namibia is marked by many atrocities committed by German colonial forces and South African apartheid troops. This common history must continue to unite us as it united our forebearers who fought against German colonial occupation of our motherland at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Namibia is our country.**

**This is where we belong as Namibians. All of us! The destiny of this land is in our hands.**

**Therefore, I wish to emphasize that the most appropriate manner to honour our fallen heroes and heroines is for all Namibians, from all backgrounds to strengthen the bonds of unity and National Reconciliation and to work as one team for the socio-economic development of our country. It is our duty, as a nation to join hands and work collectively to improve the living conditions of our people and thereby bring an end to poverty.**

**As Government, we will continue to prioritize service delivery, especially in rural settlements and peri-urban areas around our towns and cities. Government has initiated programmes to improve the living conditions of our citizens in these areas.**

**These include expanding access to basic services such as clean drinking water, health care, electricity and housing.**

**We are busy modernizing and expanding physical and communication infrastructure such as roads and telephone networks as means of developing these areas.**

**Our focus will continue to be people-centred development, especially on the youth, women, the elderly, communal farmers, orphans and other vulnerable children as well as people with disabilities. This must include ALL our people without discrimination or exception. Therefore, our policy interventions and programmes aim to address the challenges facing all Namibians who are facing difficult situations.**

**We will also continue to improve our education and training sector in order to equip our young people with the necessary knowledge and skills. This is vital to prepare our young people for the future and to make Namibia more competitive at regional, continental and international levels.**

**We should remember that the young Namibians who lost their precious lives at a tender age in Cassinga and at other locations, were robbed of their right to obtain education and their future. In honour of these patriots, our young people must study hard to obtain qualifications and contribute to the development of our country.**

**Fellow Namibians,**

**Today, we pause to remember and honour the bravery and sacrifices of our heroes and heroines, whose blood waters our freedom. We pause to salute the solidarity and support of our Comrades and friends who fought side-by-side with us, who provided the struggling people of Namibia with material, military, political and diplomatic support during those difficult days until final victory was achieved.**

**On this special day, we salute our brothers and sisters from the Frontline States and other African countries, the Cuban Internationalist Forces, and other progressive forces who supported us in our struggle. We will always cherish your solidarity and support, which contributed to the defeat of apartheid colonialism and the birth of the Republic of Namibia on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1990.**

**I believe that the best way to honour our fallen heroes and heroines is for ALL Namibians to be proud of our hard-won independence at all times; to remain patriotic and committed to the ideal of national unity and to the Policy of National Reconciliation; and last but not least, to renew our commitment to hard-work.**

**Long Live the Bravery of the Heroes and Heroines of the Namibian Revolution!**

**Long Live the Republic of Namibia!**

**I thank you.**