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No date for repatriation of remains from Germany

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THE Government has not yet finalised the logistics for the trip to Germany to bring back the remains of Namibian victims of the German genocide in the early part of the last century.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture Dr Peingeondjabi Shipoh, said this while trying to clarify the misconception created by media reports that the remains, mostly skulls, would be repatriated around 28 May 2011.

The Government expects to send a delegation led by Minister Kazenambo Kazenambo, accompanied by Government and traditional leaders from the Nama and Ovaherero communities to Germany for the repatriation exercise.

Late last year Cabinet mandated the Ministries of Youth and Foreign Affairs to lead the repatriation process.

"The Government has not issued interviews or

any statement to the media regarding this matter.

"So, all that has appeared in the media is of no consequence to the Government," Shipoh told *Windhoek Observer* this week.

He explained that the two governments based the issue of repatriation on a Memorandum of Understanding and it still depends on the consent of the German government by proclaiming, "We are ready now, you can come".

Local media carried interviews with traditional leaders, particularly Chief Kuairma Rinuako, the Paramount Chief of the Herero and Chief Alfons Maharero of the Maharero Royal House.

However, Shipoh emphasised that the repatriation issue is a matter between the Namibian and German governments.

Shipoh noted, "This is not for the chiefs [to decide], they are just stakeholders. We are still busy with logistics from here and there, and it is only then we will issue a statement to the media".

Regarding the reported deadline of 28 May,

Shipoh felt that the communities involved might want the repatriation to coincide with the formal closure of the concentration camps where the Germans held thousands of Ovaherero and Nama captive.

The end of May is a period of remembrance for the victims, mostly women and children whom the Germans incarcerated in concentration camps such as the ones at Shark Island and in Windhoek. These were survivors of the infamous extermination order by General Lothar von Trotha during the war of resistance against German colonial rule between 1904 and 1908.

A large number of skulls are stored at German universities, where the German colonialists took them for dubious scientific studies.

The Government decided to demand the return of the skulls for reference purposes and as material evidence in the on-going claims for reparations by descendants of the victims of the genocide.

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