

Herero Chief Still Demands German Reparations

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THE Namibian and the German governments should not sweep the reparation issue and the call for dialogue between Hereros and Germany under the carpet, Chief Alfons Maharero said at Okahandja during the annual Herero Day over the weekend.

It was the 87th commemoration of the return of the remains of Chief Samuel Maharero, who died in exile in 1923, from Botswana to Okahandja to be buried there.

His grandson, Chief Alfons Maharero, said genuine reconciliation will not be achieved unless the historical impediment of the 1904 to 1908 uprising against German colonisation is sternly addressed.

"It will not help for both our Government and the German government to sweep this issue under the carpet. It is not possible to wish that those events never took place while they are a historical fact. People were killed, their properties were stolen, land was confiscated," Chief Alfons Maharero said.

Recently the community leaders attended a meeting in Windhoek to deliberate on the return of the skulls of the Namibian people who were beheaded by the German government forces [during 1904-1907], he added.

"The skulls were taken to Germany for so-called scientific analysis. This inhumane and barbaric act by the German [imperial] government soldiers is being swept under the carpet by the current German government that is supposed to be civilised," he added.

"I assure the German government and its representative in Namibia to which we extended a hand of friendship on various occasions, but where our unequivocal call were ignored, that we will not rest until a proper dialogue has taken place and justice is restored to put this matter to rest. The German government should show maturity and act in a civilised manner to address its historical mess."

Festus Tjikuua, Secretary of the Ovaherero 1904 Genocide Committee (OCD), said six years after a German cabinet minister had apologised to the Herero community at Okakarara in 2004 for atrocities committed a century ago, "no significant developments have taken place to redress these past injustices". "Our people's demand for a structured constructive dialogue aimed at bringing about a restorative justice to the victims of the German colonial wars remains unanswered. Why and for how long should we wait?" Tjikuua asked.

Tjikuua told the gathering that the OCD decided in May this year that the skulls should not be buried upon their return to Namibia but should be kept in a certain museum for historical reasons. It further resolved that repatriation of the skulls must be linked to the reparation demand since they are linked to the 1904-08 genocide. It is suggested that the delivery and acceptance of the skulls must be accompanied by an undertaking by both governments to engage in a dialogue process leading to reparations.

Herero, Nama, Damara and Baster communities demand reparations from Germany for loss of land and livelihood as their cattle was taken away and also for the physical atrocities committed against them.