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Namibia to repatriate victims of German extermination

THE persistent call by the Government to have the remains of Namibians who were victims of the German war of extermination repatriated back home may be realised as early as next year. Namibia has persistently demanded the unconditional repatriation of all human skulls mostly of Ovaherero and Nama victims of the uprising against German colonial rule between 1904 and 1908. The skulls are stored at German universities. Thousands of indigenous people perished because of the extermination order by General Lothar von Trotha. Cabinet has now directed the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture to budget for the repatriation of the remains from Germany during the next fiscal year. According to a media statement from Cabinet chambers, the remains (skulls) will be stored at the national museum upon their return to Namibia. The Government decided the skulls should be stored for reference purposes and as material evidence in the on-going case of genocide compensation. Cabinet has also directed the Ministry of Youth to prepare and arrange a welcome worthy of heroes for the soon-to-be-repatriated remains. Government plans to have President Hifikepunye Pohamba lead the party welcoming the remains on their arrival at Hosea Kutako International Airport or any designated place decided by Cabinet. The remains are expected to be returned before May 2011. Meanwhile, the Government has made it clear that the issue of dialogue with Germany on the issue of genocide as raised by the Ovaherero and Nama Traditional Authorities is not part of the process. "It falls outside the scope and mandate of the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture. The issue of the return of the remains is separate from the demand for genocide compensation," the statement said.