Chiefs Urge Govt to Request for Skulls

By Kuvee Kangueehi

WINDHOEK – Chief Kuaima Riruako, together with representatives of Chief Dawid Frederick of the !Aman clan, on Monday requested Prime Minister Naftas Angula to make an official request for the repatriation of 47 Namibian skulls that are in a German museum.

The delegation which was led by Riruako met the Prime Minister at his office and informed him that if the Government is not prepared to make the request in its own name, it should at least do so on behalf of the Nama and Herero-speaking people in the country.

Speaking to New Era yesterday, Riruako said their meeting with Angula was successful as the Prime Minister agreed to make an official request to the German government to return the skulls.

The paramount chief said they decided to approach the Prime Minister because the Namibian reparation case, which the repatriation of the skulls is part of, is now in the hands of the Namibian Government.

The chief said they also asked the Premier to find out why the skulls were taken to Germany in the first place, and if studies were done on them, then the results should be made public to the Namibian people.

Riruako also demanded that the identity of these victims be made public and said 47 Namibian skulls are stored in the German Museum of Ethnology in Berlin, where they are on display.

Riruako said the meeting with the Prime Minister was productive and that the skulls would be returned in due course.

The skulls were taken to Germany during the German colonial era and were embedded in the foundation of the Berlin Museum. The skulls were later moved to the German Museum of Ethnology, where they have been on display since the 1970s.

The skulls are believed to belong to Nama-speaking people who were killed by the Germans during their conquest of Namibia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The skulls were taken from the southern part of the country, including Swakopmund, Omaruru, and Cunene. The skulls were then moved to Germany in 1916 and have been on display in the museum ever since.

Riruako said the skulls would be returned to Namibia in a way that is respectful and culturally appropriate, and that the Namibian people would participate in the process.

The skulls are considered to be a symbol of Namibian identity and are an important part of Namibian history.

The Namibian Government has been working to have the skulls repatriated for many years, and this request is a step in that direction.

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