Germans Insist on ‘Request’ for Skulls

By Kuvee Kanguehi

WINDHOEK – The repatriation of 47 Namibian skulls that are in a German museum, appears to be in limbo after the Acting German Ambassador to Namibia, Ute Koenig, yesterday reiterated her country’s position that they cannot return the skulls without an official request from the Namibian Government.

Her comments yesterday followed an earlier public statement by Prime Minister Nahas Angula that Namibia will not make the official request because when the Germans took the skulls of Namibians for research, they did not get permission from Namibians.

Koenig told New Era yesterday that if nobody wants the skulls, Germany cannot return them.

“When we return the skulls, somebody must accept them and without an official request, we do not know whom to give them to.”

Koenig said the repatriation process cannot be handled single-handedly and the cooperation of the Namibian authorities is needed in this regard.

The acting ambassador noted that she has forwarded media reports in the country to Germany and has not received an official response.

Earlier Angula said that it would be insensitive of the German government to expect a request from the Namibian Government.

However, former Namibian Ambassador to Germany, Professor Peter Katjivivi, says a controversy should not be created around the repatriation of skulls because it is a very sensitive issue.

He notes that the National Heritage Council is the appropriate body to deal with the repatriation of the skulls and thus the director of the council should meet with the board of the council to map the way forward.

SKULLS on Page 2
Skulls

From Page 1

Kualaivivi, as a former chairperson of the Board of the National Heritage Council, advised the council that once it starts the process, it should not operate in a vacuum and should consult affected communities as broadly as possible.

"The council should be mandated by the Government to oversee the process and ensure that these Namibians are given a dignified burial," Information emerged earlier of investigations having in a serious backlog in cases, which results in delays of up to a year or more between the trial dates of last year. A total of 53,477 people were occupied in polling facilities. Namibia had the highest rate of suspects, with 7,260, 9,007, 5,323, 4,664, and 4,777, respectively. Karas with 3,463, Otjo with 3,341, Oshana with 3,103, Caprivi with 633 and Kunene with 3,341. These skulls belong to Namibians who lived in the southern part of the country and at Swakopmund.

It is suspected that the skulls from the southern part of the country belong to the Nama-speaking people, while the skulls from Swakopmund are from Hereros, Damara and Namas. The council should be mandated by the Government to oversee the process and ensure that these Namibians are given a dignified burial. The Herero people began an uprising against the German colonial rulers in January 1904 with warriors—incensed by German settlers stealing their land—and were driven back to the west of Windhoek in a decisive battle on the 16th of August 1904. The main actions occurred at Aus and Erongo, and Hardap's with Erongo and Hardap's were outstanding.

Conclusions of the council are to be submitted to the Namibian Government in Berlin.