

The Namibian Sun

Genocide skulls finally here.

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THE 20 skulls of Herero and Nama victims of Namibia's anticolonial struggle of 1904 out of the 47 skulls kept at Charite University in Berlin, will be repatriated to Namibia on 28 May this year. Of the 20 skulls, 11 belonging to Nama speaking people have been positively identified while 9 belonging to the Herero speaking people were also indentified. Between 12 and 15 skulls were found at the Albert Ludwig University in Freiburg, Germany, but they will not be returning to Namibia as identification still needs to be finalised.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Youth National Service Culture and Sport (MYNSCS), the Ovaherero Genocide Committee (OGC), the Ovaherero- Ovambanderu Council for Dialogue on the 1904 Genocide and the Nama Traditional Leaders Association met yesterday to discuss logistical arrangements for the repatriation of the skulls.

According to the Chairperson at the OGC, Utjiua Muinjangu, Geneticist Dr. Eugene Fischer was the master-mind behind the research of Herero and Nama brains and skulls to prove the inferiority of blacks to Germans. In addition, tests of a mixture of brains from whites and blacks were performed to determine what type of capabilities the offspring could have, said Muinjangu. "The youngest known brain is of a one year old Nama girl, deliberately killed during the genocide as the child could clearly not have been involved in the battle field", she commented.

The process of identifying skulls is ongoing as some skulls are believed to be from citizens of Togo, Tanzania, Cameroon and Aborigines of Australia. A number of skulls may be in the private possession of German citizens, because an anonymous German citizen claimed to have inherited a skull from his father and wanted to have it returned to Namibia said Muinjangu, explaining that the skull could not be returned without positive identification.

A Namibian delegation including stakeholders and traditional leaders of the Ovaherero, Ovambanderu and Nama communities, will travel to Germany to collect the skulls; a list of persons to accompany the delegation will be submitted to the MYNSCS, which is the implementing ministry. Cultural rituals, such as ululating, battle cries, mourning and songs will be performed in Germany on the arrival of the delegation as well as in Namibia upon the arrival of the skulls of the fallen heroes. The skulls will be preserved at a Namibian museum for further reference as well as to preserve evidence of genocide committed against Namibians.

"The ultimate goal of the OGC is to have justice prevail, and this will only happen once Germany starts dialogue with the affected communities and reaches an agreeable way of reparations", said the Committee Member Responsible for Monuments at OGC, Mose Kavendjii.

A motion has been submitted to Parliament and the Government has committed themselves to the cause, he added. "The OGC would also like to have the findings of the scientific research performed on the skulls as well as artifacts returned", said Kavendjii. "If any flesh was removed from the skulls, we would like to have that back too", he added. Eighty percent of the Herero perished during the genocide and approximately half of the Nama population was killed. The total number of skulls in Germany is unknown.

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