

REFERENCE: CERD/EWUAP/114session/2024/CS/BJ/ks

13 December 2024

Excellency,

I write to inform you that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (“the Committee”) received information under its early warning and urgent action procedure in relation to the planned extension of the seaport in Lüderitz and its impacts on the rights of the Nama and Ovaherero ethnic groups.

According to the information received:

- The Government of Namibia approved the extension of the Robert Harbour quay wall in Lüderitz as part of developing a green hydrogen facility, which would impact the site of the former Shark Island concentration camp where crimes, including genocide, were committed against Nama and Ovaherero ethnic groups in the former German South-West Africa colony between 1904 and 1908;
- The abovementioned site, is considered a key site with deep historical significance, particularly to the Nama and Ovaherero ethnic groups, and the planned expansion would lead to long-term detrimental impacts on the narration of Namibian history through the erasure of a key site of genocide;
- The planned seaport expansion will entail underwater dredging, where the bodies of former camp inmates were thrown, and building over unmarked sites of graves of former camp inmates, which according to archaeological and archival research, are scattered across the outskirts of Lüderitz;
- Notwithstanding the conduct of the environmental impact assessment process, there has been no consultation with the Nama and Ovaherero ethnic groups regarding the planned port expansion on the site of the former Shark Island concentration camp in Lüderitz where their ancestors were subjected to genocide between 1904 and 1908; and
- The Nama and Ovaherero ethnic groups continue to face the legacies of their exclusion and marginalization that commenced under German rule in Namibia and face discrimination in accessing health care and education as well as limited participation and representation in public life.

H.E.Mrs. Julia Imene-Chanduru
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The Committee is concerned that the allegations regarding the seaport expansion project, if verified, would infringe rights of the Nama and Ovaherero ethnic groups protected under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Specifically, the Committee is concerned about the reported lack of effective and meaningful consultation with the Nama and Ovaherero ethnic groups in commemorating the genocide as well as designating and recognizing historical and heritage sites. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about the alleged lack of an impact assessment study of the project on this historical site.

In this regard, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations concerning Namibia ([CERD/C/NAM/CO/16-18](#), paras. 30 and 31).

In accordance with Article 9 (1) of the Convention and Article 65 of its Rules of procedure, the Committee requests the State party to provide information on the above-mentioned allegations, particularly the project to expand the seaport in Lüderitz and action taken to protect the rights of the Nama and Ovaherero ethnic groups, by 31 March 2025.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Michal Balcerzak
Chair

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination