



STATEMENT BY H.E. DR SAM NUJOMA, FOUNDING FATHER OF
THE NAMIBIAN NATION AND FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF BISHOP EMERITUS
EPISCOPUS DR. KLEOPAS DUMENI'S 90TH BIRTHDAY
CELEBRATIONS

SATURDAY, 03 OCTOBER 2020

VALOMBOLA

ONGWEDIVA

OSHANA REGION

Director of Proceedings;
Bishop Emeritus Episcopos Dr. Kleopas Dumeni, Former Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia;
Meekulu Aino Ngomashendjo Haikela-Dumeni, the Children Grandchildren and the Entire Dumeni Family;
Madam Monica Geingos, First Lady;
Omusimanekwa Tatekulu Ndilimani lipumbu, Gwelelo lyOshilongo shUukwambi;
Bishop Dr. Veikko Munyika, Western Diocese of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and all Members of the Clergy present;
Distinguished Invited Guests;
Members of the Media;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On this occasion of your 90th birthday, allow me, on behalf of the Veterans of our National Liberation Struggle, the Nujoma family and indeed on my own behalf, to join you and your family in celebrating your 90th birthday. In the same vein, allow us to heartily congratulate you on reaching the milestone occasion of 90 years.

For me personally, this significant milestone in your life, ignites fond recollections of the selfless contribution you have made to the freedom and genuine independence of our country. Your leadership and formidable conviction shall forever remain a source of inspiration to the current and future generations.

The pages of Namibian history will be incomplete without the name Kleopas Dumeni and the patriotic sacrifices you have made for the independence of our Motherland Namibia. I have no doubt that the future generations of our country shall jealously guard this freedom gained through many years of struggle by compatriots like you Bishop Emeritus Dr. Kleophas Dumeni.

Indeed, compacting 90 years in a few paragraphs is no easy task. There are just too many important events which have shaped who you are and where you are today, but I do wish to mention a few things that have impressed, inspired and enlightened us most.

I recall that your mentor, the first black leader of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Owambo-Kavango (ELOK), which was renamed Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) in 1984, Bishop Auala, confronted the colonial authorities on various issues, such as the pass laws and the introduction of the Bantustan authorities in Namibia.

In this regard, in 1971, the Lutheran churches wrote an open letter to the then South African Prime Minister, John Vorster, in which it denounced the South African role and conduct in Namibia. Upon Bishop Auala's retirement, you Bishop Kleopas Dumeni succeeded him and continued challenging the colonial authorities through your speeches.

In this regard, I recall the day when the Late Bishop Auala, accompanied by you as the then Reverend, informed me that he was going to retire. You will recall when I asked him who was going to take his place as Bishop? He diplomatically answered saying "maybe other Reverends."

I immediately asked him why not you Reverend Dumeni, particularly because you fully understood politics and the dynamics of the liberation struggle.

This is one of the reasons why you became the Assistant Bishop in 1973, following the retirement of the Late Bishop Auala.

Your ascendancy to the rank of an Assistant Bishop in 1973 gave you an opportunity to advance the cause of the liberation struggle on the platform of the Church. You held this position for two consecutive terms. I recall vividly that as acting Assistant Bishop, you represented Bishop Auala at international conferences where you spoke about the suffering and oppression of Namibians at the hands of the South African colonial regime.

While you were acting as an Assistant Bishop, our refugee camp of Cassinga was attacked by the white minority South African troops on the 4th of May 1978 in Angola. This barbaric attack was carried out by about 500 apartheid South African paratroopers in an operation code named Reindeer. About 800 women, children and the elderly persons were cold-bloodedly murdered by the South African white minority apartheid regime.

In response to this attack, you wrote a pastoral letter to the parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Owambo-Kavango (ELOK) calling for constant prayer for the liberation of Namibia and extended a message of condolences to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Owambo-Kavango (ELOK) members, many of whom had lost their family members in that massacre.

During the same period, you also fearlessly issued a statement together with the representatives of the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist Church in which you condemned the white minority South African regime on Cassinga massacre.

At the end of your second term as an Assistant Bishop in 1978, you were elected as the second Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Owambo-Kavango (ELOK). You became a Bishop at the time when the fight for the liberation of Namibia was gaining momentum.

As a result, you spoke at various international conferences to inform the international community that Namibians desired peace and freedom. You led various delegations abroad that preached about their desire for Namibia's independence. The following highlights amplify your bravery and selfless patriotism:

- You established links with the Lutheran churches in Namibia and beyond to help you call for the implementation of UN Resolution 435, which paved the way for the independence of Namibia.
- You were also passionate about the education of Namibians and you considered Bantu education as an education of inferior quality. Thus, you launched a massive campaign for the training of young people in various fields.
- The Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America responded to your call to fund the studies for the Namibian students and other international church bodies, such as the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) also offered a helping hand in this regard.
- You also enabled members of your church whose lives were at risk to sneak out of the country under the pretext of further studies.
- You contacted members of the Lutheran Church in USA, Finland as well the Church World Organisation to provide financial support and facilitate the admission of these members to institutions of higher education.
- You headed the Namibian delegation that took part in the World Council of Churches' Lusaka Consultation in 1987, which formulated a response to the dilemma of dealing with the overt and covert violence of an occupying power of the white minority regime of South Africa.
- You also campaigned for the release of political prisoners when you teamed up with Bishop Kauluma and Bishop Haushiku to call for the release of the Cassinga prisoners at Mariental in a secret camp in 1984.
- You also had access to classified information of the white minority South African soldiers. Through the network activities known as elyenge, you were also able to channel the information to SWAPO about the planned activities of the Koevoet and the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF).
- You channelled information to Bishop Kauluma and Bishop Kauluma relayed the message to Shapua Kaukungwa, who was the representative of SWAPO in London. Shapua in turn cabled Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba, the Former President of the Republic of Namibia, in Angola, who also informed me.

On this epoch of your exemplary and revolutionary life, we also put on record our appreciation to your wife, Meekulu Aino Dumeni, who supported you throughout your mission and political work.

She also learned the coded language of the Elyenge network and conveyed the messages when you were not at home. Meekulu Aino Dumeni suffered together with you. On one occasion, she was temporarily detained with you at Ogongo Military base in North Central Namibia in 1980.

When the implementation of Resolution 435 of the United Nations Security Council was almost derailed due to the fight that broke out between PLAN fighters and the white minority South African soldiers on 1 April 1989, the day of its implementation, you wrote a pastoral letter to your parishioners calling for calm and constant prayer and you were instrumental in the repatriation of the PLAN fighters back to Angola after the 1st of April tragedy.

Together with Dr. Hamata and Dr. Ihuhwa you helped the Late Comrade Sylvanus Vatuva when he came out of prison at Osire.

The Late Comrade Vatuva, was a co-Founder Member of OPO in 1958 and SWAPO in 1960 when he was recruited by the Late Comrade Kaxumba Ka Ndola and issued with the SWAPO membership card by the Late Comrade Mzee Kaukungwa. He followed in the footsteps of his cousins Comrade Helao Vinia Ndadi and his elder brother the Late Comrade Hamutenya wa Nahepo Ndadi. The Late Comrade Vatuva was the one who buried at his own cost the bodies of our PLAN fighters who were cold bloodedly massacred at Ondeshifilwa and Okahenge on 1st April 1989.

Because of your courageous work, you received various honours and awards during your tenure as a leader of ELCIN. For this reason, during our independence anniversary of March 1991, I conferred upon you an Eagle Award in recognition of your contribution to the liberation struggle of Namibia.

Against this background, the Veterans of our National Liberation Struggle, the Nujoma family and indeed myself, remain indebted to the contributions you have made in your lifetime for the liberation of our country.

Once again, allow me to heartily congratulate you on the milestone occasion of your 90th birthday. Please accept my best wishes for good health and many happy returns of the day.

I thank you!