

17 April 2024

The Children and the Entire Bereaved Family of the
Late Comrade Idda Jimmy !Ha-Eirob
Snipriver Farm, Bethanie District
Berseba Constituency
//KHARAS REGION

Dear Children and the Entire Bereaved Family

It is with great sadness that I have learnt about the passing of your beloved mother, grandmother and a Veteran of our National Liberation Struggle, the Late Comrade Idda Jimmy !Ha-Eirob, on Wednesday, 3rd April 2024, at the Keetmanshoop State Hospital, in the //Kharas Region.

The news of her passing struck a deep and solemn note as it is a stark reminder that an outstanding, dedicated, committed and illustrious generation of women freedom fighters and leaders is departing.

Indeed, our country has produced men and women of distinction who have provided leadership during trying times and kept the torch of freedom alive both at home and abroad during the most difficult times of our National Liberation Struggle.

One such person was the Late Comrade Idda Jimmy, affectionately known as Comrade Idda, one of the fearless freedom fighters who was the voice of the oppressed workers and a leading campaigner for the Liberation Struggle in the South. Her life epitomises a self-sacrificing daughter of the Namibian soil who despite all odds, undertook to either die or else liberate her motherland.

Already alive to the importance of equal rights for all, the Late Comrade Idda Jimmy !Ha-Eirob, was introduced to politics at a tender age when she grew up in a family house in Lüderitz with different races – and as children, they were never discriminated against, as they were told that ‘Buchters’ are one nation.

Seeing how many workers on contract labour were exploited at fishing factories and diamond mines through cheap labour, deplorable living conditions and harassment, this ignited her resistance against apartheid. Due to her Afrikaans language proficiency, she landed a supervisory job at one of the fishing factories in Lüderitz in 1966. It was during that time that she experienced the brunt of apartheid.

Due to her political activism, as part of the group that demanded an investigation into the death of the Late Comrade Mathew Shikongo, the former Chairman of the Lüderitz SWAPO Branch who died through poisoning, the security forces of the apartheid regime of South Africa arrested her and other comrades under AG 26. They blindfolded and severely assaulted her and other comrades, interrogating them on why they joined SWAPO.

After the detention, she had swollen fingers and arms due to the assault and was fired from the factory the same day. But this did not dent her political resolve, as she continued mobilising for SWAPO while also sensitising our people to stand up against apartheid. From that time, there was no turning back but standing up for the people's rights and officially received her SWAPO membership card at a rally in Oshikuku in 1972.

In 1977, she was elected as SWAPO Party Women's Council's Chairperson and an Advisor to the Executive Committee of the SWAPO Lüderitz Branch where she played a pivotal role in establishing the Party's structures in factories around Lüderitz, Aus, Karasburg, Rosh-Pinah, Keetmanshoop and Gibeon.

One day from her farm in Bethanie, in the Southwestern part of Namibia, she narrated her incredible political journey of resistance and perseverance against the former colonial South African apartheid regime about her involvement in representing her fellow workers and participation in the liberation struggle, saying that: *"I was like a mother to many people. The compounds were not healthy for our people and I always went there to talk to these men. They took me like a sister or mother and I mediated between them and their managers to speak on their behalf."*

The Late Comrade Idda Jimmy was arrested again during a rally in Gobabis and imprisoned over her political activities. It was in Gobabis in 1977 where she spent eight months in prison with her one-year-old son Natangwe Jimmy who started walking and talking for the first time in his life, as she emotionally recounted herself. *"During this period, the apartheid security forces wanted to serve me with the death penalty – but luckily, due to some health shortcomings, I escaped the gallows,"* she said.

After serving her prison term, she resumed her political career and was arrested again on the 4th of May 1978, the same day the racist South African troops attacked the Cassinga refugee camp in Angola. This was followed by another arrest under the notorious Terrorism Act of 1967 for imploring all Namibians to support the Armed Liberation Struggle by the combatants of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's Military Wing.

This was in response to the Cassinga Massacre with a rallying call saying “Comrades, give the SWAPO Freedom Fighters food, shelter and water, as I did yesterday. They are our sons, brothers and husbands fighting for the freedom and independence of Namibia”.

These profound and self-incriminating statements led to her arrest despite being seven months pregnant. Thus, she was one of the first women to be imprisoned and was sentenced to 7 years in prison by the South African apartheid regime for addressing the necessity for the armed struggle at a SWAPO rally in October 9, 1980.

She gave birth in prison to her son named Richard Kondjeleni Jimmy. When the baby was three months old, he was put under the care of the Late Comrade Idda’s mother, Ouma Justina Gouws. Unfortunately, the baby later passed on and Comrade Idda was refused to attend the funeral and bury her son.

After Namibia gained independence, the Late Comrade Idda Jimmy, although bedridden as a result of wounds inflicted on her by the repugnant apartheid regime, even at the age of 78 she has not given up her political activism and committed herself to the ongoing mobilisation activities of the party making a notable and influential contribution to the growth and political discussions in her community.

When we speak of selflessness, the Late Comrade Idda Jimmy’s name stands out as a shining example. Very few people can be said to have served their country and people with dedication, selflessness and patriotism like the Late Comrade Idda Jimmy has done.

As a former Robben Island Political Prisoner, she was an inspiration to many who spend seconds, minutes, hours, nights, days, months and years in captivity through the notorious apartheid regime, where our people endured torture and many things done to an individual beyond imagination, especially if you are a female.

She lived a humble life which is something that most of those who endured the hardship of prison life have in common. Therefore, let us honour our heroes and heroines by putting Namibia first and the interests of our masses first. Let us wipe out tribal tendencies, which are aimed at threatening our hard-won independence, and have respect for our elders and leaders.

We are thus laying to rest a stalwart and a mother who combined resilience and fortitude in fighting colonial oppression and apartheid, with compassion for the poor and the downtrodden. We are bidding farewell to a heroine who shaped many people’s political thought and action in many ways. We are paying tribute not just to a fellow freedom fighter and former political prisoner but also to a compatriot and a leader in her own right.

She taught us that women have an important role to play in the struggle and there are many lessons that this stalwart of the Liberation Struggle has left for us. She suffered persecution, imprisonment and harassment by the security apparatus of the apartheid regime, but she never wavered.

Despite the persecution, she remained an epitome of grace and dignity and did not let bitterness engulf her heart but remained focused on the mission of achieving freedom and justice for her people. Her legacy demonstrates the critical role that women played in the liberation struggle. We therefore acknowledge their immense contribution and sacrifices for our freedom and genuine independence. For this reason, her exemplary deeds shall be remembered by the present and future generations.

To her family, her brother, her four sisters and four children, namely; Michael Jimmy, Ndeshi Shaamena, Natangwe Jimmy and Annamarie Kaputu whom she brought up since she was seven months old as well as several other children she brought up and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, our hearts go out to you as you go through the grief of a loss so overwhelming.

As you walk through this difficult time, it is our wish that you are consoled by the knowledge that the formidable legacy of the Late Comrade Idda Jimmy will live on. Her courage, her compassion and her service to the people of Namibia will remain a light that brightens our darkest day. May it be that others step forward to follow in her footsteps and take up her mantle.

As she finds her final resting place, allow me to thank our government for conferring on her the honour of National Hero and a State Funeral. This is a fitting tribute, with honour and reverence, to a gallant freedom fighter and an unwavering patriot who received numerous accolades for her fearless dedication to the liberation cause, including awards from the Late Cuban President, El Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz and the Most Distinguished Order of Namibia First Class in 1995, for meritorious service.

In closing, allow me on behalf of the Veterans of our National Liberation Struggle, the Nujoma family and indeed on my own behalf, to extend our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies to the entire bereaved family members for the loss of the Late Comrade Idda Jimmy !Ha-Eirob. May we all be granted fortitude during this trying time.

May her rest be as peaceful as she was and may her revolutionary spirit live on!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sam Nujoma', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Sam Nujoma
FOUNDING PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA