

28 December 2024

The Widow, Meme Frieda Magano Nangombe, the Children
and the Entire Bereaved Family
Oukwandongo Village
Outapi Constituency
OMUSATI REGION

Dear Meme Frieda Magano Nangombe, the Children and the Entire Bereaved Family

It is with profound sadness that I have learned of the tragic passing of your beloved husband, father, grandfather, and a Veteran of our National Liberation Struggle, Comrade Heikki Shililifa, on Monday 16th December 2024, at Oshakati Intermediate Hospital in Oshana Region.

This is indeed a sad and devastating loss for the immediate family, the Aakwanime and Aatundu clans in particular and the nation in general. In this regard, we join the entire family, friends and Comrades as you gather in solemn mourning to pay your last respects to a veteran of our liberation struggle and a respected educationalist whose entire life was dedicated to the cause of the freedom of his people. As we mourn his passing, we also celebrate a life well lived in the service of others.

Like all boys of his time, the Late Comrade Heikki Shililifa looked after cattle and did other home chores that children were expected to perform at that time as per our norms and traditions. In addition to this, he attended primary school at Nakayale junior primary school in Ombalantu and continued his secondary education at Jorgen Boys' school at Oniipa. Later on, he went to further his studies at Ongwediva Seminary where he trained as a teacher. Some of his classmates at that time were Andreas Dumeni, Retired Bishop Josephat Shanghala, Willbard Tashiya (Nakada), Samson Ndeikwiila, Nahas Angula and His Excellency Dr Nangolo Mbumba.

The late Comrade Shilifa's political activism started at Ongwediva Seminary where they discussed the history of Namibia with other students and the abuse of human rights in the country by the apartheid regime.

It was at that time that he realized that he had to fight against the injustices perpetrated against our people by the colonial regime. After completing his teacher's training at Ongwediva, he was sent by ELCIN to go and teach at a remote school at Oukwandongo village in Ombalantu close to the Namibian and Angolan borders.

When the Combatants of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's Military Wing, were deployed at the Front to fight militarily against the South African colonial forces of occupation, the late Comrade Shililifa was one of the local residents who fearlessly volunteered to assist them with transport and provide shelter to Namibians who wanted to cross the border and join SWAPO in exile with particular reference in 1975 when Angola attained her independence from the Portuguese.

His homestead became a transit point for those Namibians who were fleeing the country to join the liberation struggle in exile. He even used his private vehicle for clandestine operations including to transport people and arms and ammunitions belonging to the combatants of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's Military wing. He did all this while he was still a school teacher and in addition, together with his wife, Meme Frieda Magano Nangombe, he provided valuable information to Plan combatants on the movements of the enemy forces.

His unwavering and staunch support to the liberation struggle did not go unnoticed and on the 28 April 1978, he was ambushed by the apartheid forces while he was clandestinely transporting students who wanted to cross the border into Angola and together they were arrested and he was jailed in Oshakati and later transferred to a prison in Otjiwarongo. When he appeared in court, Advocate Bryan O'Linn represented him well but he could not be acquitted because of the solid evidence against him in possession of the colonial authorities, allegedly about his participation in the liberation struggle.

It was against this background that he was found guilty of supporting terrorism and sentenced to five years imprisonment on Robben Island. While serving his sentence at Robben Island he found his fellow comrades who were held as prisoners, namely Martin Kapewasha, Jerry Ekandjo, Andimba Toivo yaToivo and Peter Ilonga. He was only released on 29 June 1983 after serving his sentence.

After returning to Namibia from prison he got a teaching post at Omuulukila Primary School and he continued providing logistical support to those Namibians who wanted to go into exile and assist PLAN Combatants as he was doing before going to prison. Due to his unwavering support to SWAPO, the South African colonial forces, including the notorious Koevoet units, used to make frequent unannounced visits at night, in order to interrogate him and harass his family. Sometimes they used to pursue him at school. For instance, on the 3rd December 1983, Koevoet elements went to his classroom, kicked him and hit him with rifle butts in front of his learners and arrested him but later released him.

Thus, like many selfless Namibians, the Late Comrade Heikki Shililifa sacrificed a lot of his personal time and energy for the liberation of our country which demonstrates how dedicated this servant of the nation was to his party and the country at large. He successfully completed the assignment that was entrusted to him until the attainment of our country's freedom and genuine independence on the 21st of March 1990.

To the Widow, Meme Frieda Magano Nangombe, the Children and the Entire Bereaved Family, We share in your sorrow and join you in celebrating a life well lived in the service of our people, punctuated by indelible marks of bravery and patriotism.

May you be comforted by all the words of honour that have been ascribed to your beloved husband, father, grandfather and a veteran of our national liberation struggle. Similarly, may you take solace in the fact that his bravery and selfless sacrifice did not go unnoticed as he was honoured with the Most Distinguished Order of Namibia First Class on the 27th August 2015, alongside many other veterans of the liberation struggle.

As the family comes to terms with this tragic moment of the dark cloud hovering around you, allow me on behalf of the Veterans of our National Liberation Struggle, the Nujoma family and indeed on my own behalf, to convey our deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathies for this irreparable loss.

It is my sincere wish that we may all be comforted and granted fortitude during this difficult time of mourning, and may the revolutionary spirit of the Late Comrade Mitiri Heikki Shililifa continue to guide us as we chart the future destiny of our country.

May His Soul Rest Peacefully in Eternity.



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