

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**TRIBUTE BY H.E. DR. HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA,
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
NAMIBIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE
MEMORIAL SERVICE IN HONOUR OF LATE
FOUNDING PRESIDENT AND FATHER OF THE
NAMIBIAN NATION, HIS EXCELLENCY DR. SAM
SHAFIISHUNA NUJOMA**

28 FEBRUARY 2025

**WINDHOEK
KHOMAS REGION**

**Check Against Delivery*

Director of Ceremonies;

Your Excellency Dr. Nangolo Mbumba,
President of the Republic of Namibia;

Madam Sustjie Mbumba, First Lady of the
Republic of Namibia;

Your Excellency Dr. Netumbo Nandi-
Ndaitwah, Vice President of the Republic of
Namibia and President-elect, and Lieutenant
General (Rtd) Epafra Denga Ndaitwah;

Meme Kovambo Nujoma, Founding First Lady
and Widow of late Dr. Sam Shafiishuna
Nujoma;

Your Excellencies Heads of State and
Government;

Your Excellencies, Former Heads of State and
Government;

Distinguished Heads of Delegations;
Fellow Mourners;

Allow me to stand on the established protocols.

Dear Mourners;

On Saturday, 8 February 2025, our nation received the devastating news of the passing of the leader of our revolution, our Founding President and Father of the Namibian Nation, Dr. Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma.

Today, it is with immense pain that I join you in paying our last respects, while at the same time, celebrating the legacy of a great man, a visionary leader and Commander-in-Chief par excellence. A man who commanded the brave sons and daughters of Namibia through the jungles of Africa, crossing many rivers of blood in pursuit of their freedom and independence of their motherland.

The struggle for freedom and independence was not easy. There were many obstacles along

the way, but Comrade Sam Nujoma persevered.

He commanded and motivated freedom fighters, built and prepared a team of cadres through education and training to be ready to take over the administration of affairs of their motherland as victory was certain. Our struggle needed someone with Comrade Nujoma's calibre to keep us together until victory was achieved. Against all odds, Comrade Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma held the movement together and indeed, history was achieved. Namibia is finally free.

As part of the leadership of SWAPO, I was privileged to work closely with Comrade Sam Nujoma for many years, both in exile and after independence. I first met late Comrade Sam Nujoma in Dar es Salaam in 1961.

Dear Mourners;

History tells us that Comrade Nujoma became involved in politics in the 1950s through trade unions.

His political career was shaped by his work experiences, his awareness of the dehumanising contract labour system under the Southwest Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA), and his knowledge of the increased campaigns for independence across Africa.

Due to his participation in these activities, Comrade Nujoma was dismissed from South African Railways in 1957. In the same year, a group of Namibians working in Cape Town led by Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo formed the Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC). OPC was opposing South Africa's policies in South West Africa, including the inhumane contract labour system under which people were forced to work for up to two years for meagre wages.

In 1959, Comrade Nujoma joined the OPC, which was later transformed to Owamboland People's Organisation (OPO).

Together with Cde Jacob Kuhangua, co-founder of OPO, they established the Windhoek branch of the Organisation at the then Old Location in Windhoek. At its first congress in 1959, Comrade Sam Nujoma was elected President of OPO.

Dear Mourners;

During the following year, Comrade Nujoma travelled to other Namibian towns in secret, mobilising and setting up branch structures of OPO. After the Old Location Massacre in Windhoek in December 1959, Sam Nujoma was arrested and charged for organizing the protest and faced threats of deportation to his native area in the northern part of the country. Comrade Nujoma was released after one week in custody.

Following a directive by OPO leadership in collaboration with Chief Hosea Kutako, it was decided that Comrade Nujoma should leave the country and join the other Namibians in exile who were lobbying the United Nations

on behalf of the anti-colonial cause for Namibia.

Comrade Nujoma went into exile on 29 February 1960, passing through Bechuanaland from where he travelled to Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia by train. From Bulawayo, he flew to Salisbury (now Harare) and then travelled to Ndola in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) with the assistance of members of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) of Northern Rhodesia, he crossed into Tanganyika.

Dear Mourners;

In April 1960, Comrade Nujoma travelled from Tanganyika to Khartoum, Sudan and from there to Accra, Ghana, where he attended the All African People's Conference organized by President Nkrumah in protest against the French atomic bomb tests in the Sahara Desert.

At that Conference, Comrade Nujoma met other African nationalist leaders such as

Patrice Lumumba and Joseph Kasa-Vubu of the Congo, President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, and Frantz Fanon of Algeria.

His engagement with other African nationalist leaders left a lasting impression and informed his Pan-African outlook.

President Kwame Nkrumah assisted Comrade Nujoma to travel to Liberia and later to the United States, where the case on South West Africa was presented to the International Court of Justice. In 19 April 1960, OPO was reconstituted and transformed into South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in Windhoek. Comrade Nujoma was elected President in absentia.

Dear Mourners;

Comrade Nujoma arrived in New York in June 1960, where he presented Namibia's petition before the Special Political and Decolonisation

Committee (Fourth Committee) of the United Nations General Assembly. Comrade Nujoma's demand was for South West Africa/Namibia to be given her independence by 1963 at the latest. He returned to Tanganyika in 1961, from where he and a small group of South West African activists developed SWAPO into an international force.

With support from other African nationalists and strong backing from Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Prime Minister of Tanganyika, Comrade Nujoma established SWAPO's provisional Headquarters in Dar es Salaam and arranged scholarships and military training for the many Namibians who had then started to join him in exile.

In 1962, SWAPO founded its armed wing, the South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA), later renamed the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). Comrade Nujoma procured the first weapons (two PPS guns and two pistols) from Algeria and carried them by air

through Egypt, Kenya to Tanzania. He then ordered Cde Peter Nanyemba to take the weapons to Zambia, from where they were taken to OmuguluGwombashe in the then Ovamboland by Commander John Nankudhu and his five comrades.

Dear Mourners;

On 21 March 1966, in a bid to test South Africa's claims at the International Court of Justice at The Hague that Namibians in exile were free to return to Namibia and its assertion that they were in self-imposed exile, Comrade Nujoma and I chartered a plane from Livingstone, Zambia to Windhoek. On arrival at the airport, we were arrested and deported back to Zambia the following day.

On 26 August 1966, the first armed clash between SWALA and colonial South African security forces took place when paratroopers and police attacked SWALA combatants who had set up camp at OmuguluGwombashe. The attack marked the beginning of the Namibian

armed struggle for independence, which lasted more than 23 years.

In 1969, Comrade Nujoma was re-affirmed as SWAPO Party President at the Tanga Consultative Conference in Tanzania.

He continued his diplomatic rounds as SWAPO set up offices across Africa, Europe and the Americas.

He represented SWAPO at the founding of the Non-aligned Movement on 1 September 1961 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, as well as at the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 25 May 1963. The OAU and the UN General Assembly recognised SWAPO as the only lawful representative of the Namibian people.

Dear Mourners;

Under the weight of military pressure from the liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde Island, the Portuguese Empire collapsed in

1974, and Namibia's long border with Angola became wide open to guerrilla infiltration. Comrade Nujoma realised the opportunity provided by these changes and two years later, SWAPO's shifted most of its military campaign and bases from Zambia to Angola. The opening of the border enabled thousands of SWAPO supporters to stream out of Namibia to join the movement in exile.

Comrade Nujoma led the SWAPO negotiation team between the West Contact Group (WCG), which consisted of West Germany, Britain, France, the US and Canada, and South Africa on the one hand, and the Frontline States and Nigeria on the other, about the proposal that would eventually become the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435, passed in September 1978.

Resolution 435 embodied the plan for free and fair elections in Namibia, which was delayed for the next ten years before implementation. South Africa's delaying tactics and the decision by the US Reagan administration to

link the Cuban withdrawal from Angola to Namibia's independence frustrated hopes of an immediate settlement. In March 1989, the cease-fire agreement with South Africa was signed, which resulted in the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435.

Dear Mourners;

After 29 years in exile, Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma returned to Namibia in September 1989 to lead SWAPO to decisive victory in the UN-supervised elections that paved the way for Namibia's independence.

Comrade Nujoma spent the bigger part of his life fighting for the independence of our country, which was achieved on 21 March 1990. On that historic day, Comrade Nujoma stated that "Namibia will forever be free". Since then, our nation has enjoyed peace and stability. Our country has been at peace with itself and its neighbours. We have made notable strides in different areas of social and

economic development, expansion of our infrastructure, and the improvement of the living conditions of our people under the banner of ONE NAMIBIA, ONE NATION.

We are, therefore, honoured to paying fitting tribute to this African icon and outstanding son of the Namibian people who served our country and people for many decades with unparalleled distinction.

First as a freedom fighter and later as Head of State of independent Namibia.

Comrade Nujoma's departure reminds us of the long journey we have travelled as Namibians. It reminds us of the many battles we have fought, the countless rivers of blood we crossed, and the unwelcoming jungles we have walked through in search of our freedom and independence.

Dear Mourners;

As Commander-in-Chief of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN),

Comrade Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma motivated us not to give up, but to continue fighting until Namibia was free. His unwavering leadership and courage will never be forgotten. It is part and parcel of our proud history as Namibians. I am narrating the life of a man with an illustrious history of selfless dedication to the country and its people. A man whose dedication to the total liberation of our country from the yoke of apartheid colonialism was total and unquestionable.

Dear Mourners,

I believe that the befitting farewell we can give our Founding President is for the nation, particularly the young people, to embrace and internalize the ideals which Comrade Sam Nujoma lived and fought for. These include his strong belief in hard work, unity of purpose, National Reconciliation and rejection of the vices of tribalism, ethnicity and regionalism.

Comrade Nujoma has lived a full life. His legacy will continue to inspire the nation at large.

Yes, Comrade Nujoma will surely be missed, but those who know him and those whose lives he touched should be consoled by the knowledge that he has lived to ensure the achievement of independence and the establishment of a free society, free from oppression, segregation, racism and brutality. Comrade Sam Shafiishuma Nujoma lived to see the achievement of the goals he dedicated his life to.

Comrade Nujoma fought a good fight. We will continue to sustain his legacy and that of all our heroes and heroines.

May his Soul Rest in Eternal Peace.