



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA  
THE PRESIDENCY**

**STATEMENT BY  
HER EXCELLENCY LUCIA WITBOOI,  
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON THE  
OCCASION OF IN REMEMBRANCE AND UNVEILLING OF  
THE 19 FEBRUARY 1988 OSHAKATI BARCLAYS BANK  
(FIRST NATIONAL BANK) BOMB BLAST VICTIMS  
TOMBSTONE**

**SUNDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2026  
ONGWEDIVA, OSHANA REGION**

- **Director of Proceedings;**
- **Honourable Sophia Shaningwa, Secretary General of the SWAPO Party;**
- **Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers present;**
- **Honourable Members of Parliament;**
- **Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Honourable Hofni Iipingwe, Governor of the Oshana Region and other Governors present;**
- **Your Worship, Cllr. Naemi Amuthenu, Mayor of Ongwediva Town;**
- **Honourable Regional and Local Authorities Councillors present;**
- **Commissioner (Rtd.) Ben Shikongo, President of the Namibian National Liberation Veterans Association;**
- **Veterans of the National Liberation Struggle;**
- **Esteemed Religious, Traditional, and Community Leaders;**
- **Esteemed Survivors, Descendants and Families of the Victims of the 19 February 1988 Oshakati Barclays Bank (First National Bank) Bomb Blast;**
- **Members of the Media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

**I stand before you today on behalf of Her Excellency Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, the President of the Republic of Namibia, who has delegated me to be with you on this solemn occasion of "In Remembrance and Unveiling of the 19 February 1988 Oshakati Barclays Bank (First National Bank) Bomb Blast Victims Tombstone". Her Excellency, the President, has directed me to convey her profound solidarity with the survivors, descendants, families, the Oshana Region and the entire Namibian nation in remembrance and honour of the innocent lives lost in the tragic bombing.**

**On that fateful day, an explosion devastated the premises of what was then known as the Barclays Bank, today known as the First National Bank of Namibia (FNB), claiming the lives of innocent civilians and injuring many others. The victims were not combatants. They were ordinary citizens, men and women conducting their daily affairs in a civilian space that should have been safe.**

**May I ask that we stand and observe a minute of silence in honour of all victims who perished in the 19 February 1988 Oshakati Barclays Bank (First National Bank) Bomb Blast.**

**Director of Ceremonies;  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**The 19 February 1988 Oshakati Barclays Bank (First National Bank) Bomb Blast occurred during the final and turbulent years of Namibia's liberation struggle, at a time when our country was still under the South African apartheid regime and conflict had intensified across the northern part of the country.**

**The intent behind that act was to create fear, intimidate, and destabilise the momentum of SWAPO and the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). But instead, it strengthened the unity of our people. Indeed, it exposed the cruelty of an oppressive system and reinforced the determination of Namibians to fight for freedom, dignity, and self-determination.**

**In the aftermath of such tragedy, the nation stood at a crossroads. We chose the path of reconciliation, a policy that remains a cornerstone of our national identity. Our Constitution, which enshrines the values of equality, justice, and human rights for all, was born from the**

**wounds of our past and the collective determination to forge a peaceful, inclusive, and democratic society.**

**Against this background, unveiling this tombstone signifies not just marking a grave but also leaving into our national memory the pain, loss, and sacrifice experienced by our people in the fight for freedom, justice, and dignity. We remember each victim as a beloved individual whose legacy continues to resonate within our nation.**

**Therefore, this occasion should serve as a reminder of the high cost of freedom, which countless lives of our nation's sons and daughters have paid. Indeed, our freedom was hard-won, and it is our solemn duty to protect and strengthen the processes, systems, and institutions that uphold our democracy and safeguard our nation's future. Let us, as a nation, reject all forms of violence and embrace reconciliation, healing, and nation-building.**

**Director of Ceremonies;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**As a nation born from struggle and formally independent since 1990, we understand the cost of oppression and the price of freedom. But even within the context of liberation,**

**we must be clear in affirming a universal principle: the targeting of civilians is a wound upon humanity itself.**

**As the Government, we support and commend the leadership of the Oshana Region and all stakeholders who have ensured that this gravesite reflects the respect and honour our fallen as they are worthy of.**

**To the families who lost their loved ones: your grief became part of Namibian history. Your strength became part of our nation's resilience. The pain you carried was not in vain. The bloodshed on that day nourished the tree of independence that we enjoy today.**

**To the survivors who continue to live with physical and emotional scars, we honour your courage. You are living witnesses to history. Your stories must be told, preserved, and passed on to future generations.**

**Director of Ceremonies;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**This tombstone we are unveiling is a permanent declaration that the blood of innocent civilians will not be forgotten. It will stand long, prompting future generations**

**to ask what occurred here and why. And in those questions, remembrance will endure.**

**As we unveil this tombstone today, we also affirm a national pledge that violence shall never define our future, reconciliation shall remain a cornerstone of our democracy, and unity shall remain stronger than division.**

**Namibia today stands as a peaceful, sovereign, and democratic nation. We have built our peace and stability through sacrifice, leadership, and our unwavering commitment to reconciliation.**

**Therefore, the greatest tribute we can offer the victims of the 19 February 1988 Oshakati Barclays Bank (First National Bank) Bomb Blast is to protect peace and stability, to safeguard justice, to strengthen unity, and to ensure that never again shall innocent lives be caught in the crossfire of conflict.**

**May the souls of those who perished continue resting in eternal peace. May their memories inspire us to continue striving for a just, peaceful, and prosperous nation.**

**I thank you.**