

No defence force?

AN advertisement placed in this newspaper by the Director of the Association for the Handicapped in Namibia provoked my attention. It states: 'Let Namibia not start a defence force ... let Namibia start a development force'.

I appreciate the fact that the Director wishes this country well in terms of the fact that he wants to 'save lives, prevent disability, develop Namibia, and above all, obey God's will'. However, I do not agree with the idea that in order for our country to develop we should not have a defence force.

Sure 'Namibia has impressed the world with the first-ever democratic election in Africa', but let us not be naive and unrealistic by being blind to the possible destabilising forces that surround our country. To those whose normal lives are continually disrupted by Unita bandits in the north; to those who are well aware of South Africa's tendencies to go on the rampage on adventures in neighbouring countries, the idea of Namibia being a demilitarised zone is simply unacceptable. The presence of the SADF in Walvis Bay should also ring a bell.

The notion of no defence force in Namibia is a laissez-passer for hos-

tile forces, whereby they can march in and out of our country at will. In order for Namibians to live in peace, there must be a sense of security. Moreover, those gains that we have made must be protected. We have to protect our peace, democracy and natural resources. Without a defence force, our country is easy prey. The concept of demilitarisation can only be realistic if it encompasses all neighbouring countries, especially South Africa. There also must be democracy and peace in South Africa and Angola for this Utopia to be realised.

Lastly, a defence force does not necessarily have to be destructive. It can be constructive especially if it is defensive in nature rather than offensive. While a deterrent force, its personnel and infrastructure can be employed in development projects.

Therefore a defence force should not be perceived as an anti-development force or a threat to Namibians but rather as a source of pride and security to our country and all its citizens.

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