

Defence Of Abacha Visit

THE President has recently been attacked in the media for visiting Nigeria and above all for inviting General Sani Abacha to visit Namibia. Those who criticised this action have every right to exercise their freedom of speech. However, I find the reasons they advanced in condemning the President's actions to be invalid, profoundly immature, irrational and highly misleading. Also these critics manifest a dangerous tendency of intolerance which is not healthy for the survival of democracy.

Whenever there is a conflict or dispute it is better to attempt to solve it through peaceful means, starting with dialogue. President Nujoma is very much conversant with this principle. Therefore, when Dr Buthelezi obstructed peace in South Africa he talked to him; in the same vein he extended an invitation to Dr Savimbi of Unita to come to Windhoek to discuss the problems and peace in Angola. Also, when South Africa was a pariah state, progressive people all over the world, including victims of its policies, remained ready to talk and listen. It is therefore wrong to condemn statesmen who initiate dialogue with General Abacha.

The fact that President Nujoma is willing to associate with him should not be seen as demonstrative of support for the latter's regime; it should instead be seen as an attempt to help Nigeria return to democracy.

Isolating General Abacha when he is willing to associate with democrats will only encourage him to continue violating peace in Nigeria and strengthen his

undemocratic methods of government.

Moreover, General Abacha has reportedly expressed his intention to bring about peace and democratisation in Nigeria. However some critics contend this is not a good reason for inviting him to Namibia. If this is not a good reason, then what is? Inviting General Abacha to a democratic country is a way of encouraging him to be a democrat. There is no need to adopt a negative attitude towards him.

When he visits, let us all demonstrate maximum tolerance, so he learns this fundamental tenet of a democratic dispensation.

The editorial staff of The Namibian has a habit, which I find disrespectful and insulting, of telling the government to conduct the affairs of state the way President Mandela does those of South Africa.

I know Mandela is a respected elder statesman, recognised worldwide, but there is no valid reason why we should copy his methods.

Let us be confident in the wisdom and ability of our leaders to competently run the affairs of Namibia and bring rewards to us all. When we criticise them let us also be constructive. I am sure they will listen. They are democrats.

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Note: This letter has been shortened.

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