

Prison Realities Different

WE, the Windhoek Prison inmates, would like to inform the Prime Minister and entire patriotic and tax-paying Namibian nation about incidents taking place in the Windhoek Central Prison which totally contradict the Deputy Minister of Prisons and Correctional Services, Honourable Mrs Hubschle's long term goals regarding rehabilitation and reintegration in society programme. Therefore, we decided to make use of the constitutional right, Article 21 (A) of the Namibian Constitution, which ensures freedom of expression in order to speak out about these particular situation at this law enforcement institution.

(a) **Poor administration system:** the outdated policy of paper work is mostly based on (handwritten and miscalculated) clerical work which leads to poor administration. Performances towards sound administrative strategies are lacking and sufficient equipment such as computer-based administrative programmes are not implemented. No single computer is in existence at the so-called Central Prison which is accommodating long-term prisoners. This facility is one with the rapidly growing crime rate

of the country which is fuelled by the lack of employment. The situation does not look encouraging and it could worsen. One example... during the Presidential Pardon we experienced the situation where an inmate who had to serve a two-year sentence, being a first offender, was fortunate enough to receive such a pardon. The Prison Board, however, released the wrong inmate, one who had to serve a 20-year sentence for the brutal murder of a woman. That incident clearly indicated that faulty paper work was responsible and is still continuing. Long-term inmates are kept for several days, even months or years after the expiry of their sentences because of inadequate record keeping.

(b) **Board Council:** this board is very important as it evaluates inmate behaviour. Accordingly, disciplinary actions and misconduct are recorded. It is therefore essential that authorities possess appropriate knowledge and relevant experience (as imminent scholars of law) to enable

conduct research in criminology and ethnological aspects of Namibia's social, economic and cultural life and the general standards of society. Legal and justifiable strategies should be advanced to legal experts to serve as guidelines for the board and staff. Sound psychological and moral counselling programmes should be implemented. These guidelines should take into consideration that crime also differs according to social aspects such as literacy. Although Namibia has become affiliated to international bodies dealing with such matters little has changed on the local scene. Relevant counter policies must be implemented to redirect the dignity of an inmate, the social outlook to start with, his family settlement and follow-up actions after release of long-term inmates, monitoring and observing his reintegration into society and his knowledge and understanding gained after psychological counselling. There is no open communication channels and employment companies.

(c) **Behavioural, social, cultural aspects:** with regard to human development resources, there is no progressive spirit of learning and no training or comprehensive reorientation programme of actions is in place. Effective and sufficient economically productive mass-base vocational manpower training skills can be introduced to accommodate all long-term prisoners which can serve as a counteraction strategy in prevention and combating of crime. Present Head of Prison, Superintendent Mberira, has allowed inmates to call a committee into existence. The purpose is to allocate punishment where inmates are guilty of misconduct. We condemn this committee! The strongest inmates and those possessing brute power and who have been incarcerated for serious crimes are the ones who represent inmates without election or selection. They are the ones who deal with internal misconduct on an informal hearing basis. We condemn the Government for the way in which it deals with long-term inmates

through its law enforcement bureau's outdated policies. You cannot sentence a productive citizen for a 20-year term of imprisonment for the rest of his/her life, treating him like a dog and providing no alternative to redirect his/her life.

(d) **Long-term vision lacking:** affirmative action is legal and accepted and implemented internationally. However, if it is negatively implemented by promotion and appointment through favouritism, tribal origin or political ground it will have a destructive instead of constructive effect. Lack of professional knowledge, understanding and appropriate skills result in slowing down progress. Negative factors contributing to slow progress are, e.g., rank and experience do not always coincide, i.e., someone in a higher rank disregards the assistance of a more experienced person in a lower rank. This tendency creates a continuous sub-culture which prevents structured team work and co-operation. Corruption and bribery is rife in Namibian prisons. The recruitment age of Namibians of 18-24 years is too young and these new recruits are easily influenced and contaminated by bad habits and attitudes of older staff. The motto of learn and teach actions should be implemented and promoted in order to train inmates in the skills of life to attain the human resource development goal.

(e) **Corruption:** the arrogance and corrupt behaviour of some prison staff can greatly damage the self-respect and confidence of inmates. The safety of inmates is in question when there is inadequate partitioning or division of prisoners of different grades (serving different sentences and having undergone different phases of the rehabilitation process). Improper and irregular sexual acts are committed with the knowledge and consent of prison staff. No proper night monitoring system is available and should one be injured or assaulted at night, help will only be available the next morning.

(f) **Irregularities of Amnesty:** the granting of amnesty cannot benefit long-term prisoners, but those short-term prisoners who benefit from them are repeat offenders who return to prison time and time again. Prisoners plead for the chance to show the Namibian nation that we can better ourselves. We want urgent solutions for our grievances. An in-depth investigation into prison administration and inmate conditions is necessary and the appropriate people, e.g., Minister Hubschle should visit these facilities for a personal inspection.

LONG-TERM PRISONER WINDHOEK CENTRAL PRISON

Mature Age Entry

(1998 ACADEMIC YEAR)

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL CANDIDATES ASPIRING FOR ADMISSION TO ANY DEGREES/DIPLOMAS BEING OFFERED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA FOR THE 1998 ACADEMIC YEAR THROUGH THE MATURE AGE ENTRY SCHEME

Brave Warriors Must Take No Prisoners!