

Why Should Human Rights Man Be Called To Order?

THIS is my reply to the *Namibia Today* article titled 'It is high time for Phil ya Nangoloh to be called to order' published in the Swapo mouthpiece on November 21 2003.

As a peace loving Namibian I read with concern the above mentioned article which shows the intolerance of some of the Swapo people towards human rights and democracy in this country. In an attempt to silence Namibia's only vibrant and fearless human rights organisation and its executive director, Swapo through its mouthpiece *Namibia Today* urged subordinates that "It is high time for Phil ya Nangoloh to be called to order".

I ask myself why the NSHR director should be "called to order"? The article made some allegations about what Swapo claims to be "fabricated stories".

Please allow me space in your newspaper to respond to the said claim directed at Phil ya Nangoloh, in particular, and the NSHR, in general. I want to correct these misleading and misdirected allegations.

Swapo claims that Ya Nangoloh "fabricated" stories with the purpose of "discrediting Namibian security forces" because the NSHR made several reports that Namibian and Angolan security forces have killed innocent Angolans during the recent conflict in the Kavango and Caprivi. Everybody knows by now that either through eyewitness reports or through the reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the NSHR that there were several killings committed by the Namibian security forces both in Namibia and Angola. Even recently a member of the Namibian security forces, a certain SFF commander, testified in the High Court that he and other Namibian security force members were given orders and have carried out such orders to shoot and kill people during the night in the Kavango region.

As for the Swapo question or claim

that the government should not worry about ineffective groups like Tagoma referring to the recent murder of Tagoma leader Shevanyenga, I would like to say this to Swapo: the late Mr Shevanyenga was a Namibian citizen like everyone else and the government is held responsible for the security of every Namibian. Therefore I see no point for several government and Swapo leaders to issue death threats to an ineffective group which finally led to Shevanyenga's death.

Thirdly, Swapo accused Mr Phil ya Nangoloh to have "fabricated a story of people who were perceived to be eliminated, apparently also by government."

It is a fact that Mr Phil ya Nangoloh and other NSHR human rights defenders received death threats on several occasions. This makes it difficult for them to carry out their activities which is what Swapo wants. However the NSHR and Mr ya Nangoloh must be praised and not condemned and threatened for their courage to have shed light on such incredible and cowardly attempts to undermine the defence of human rights and democracy in this country. By publicising the names of persons likely to be assassinated the NSHR most probably has saved the lives of more Namibians who might be facing assassinations. In so doing, the NSHR also strongly defended the principles of democracy and good governance and respect for the rule of law in this country as enshrined in our Namibian constitution.

Fourthly, Swapo goes on with its accusations against Ya Nangoloh by denying that there was or there is no "cross border" trade with Angola on the part of the NDF. However, there is strong evidence that the NDF made use of State vehicles and NDF soldiers to carry out such border trade in building materials apparently for the enrichment of certain individuals. The NDF themselves have never denied the NSHR report.

Fifthly, Swapo further claims that if Ya Nangoloh "do(es) not want to live under Swapo government, he should just pack and go instead of indulging himself in dangerous subversive activities." This misleading statement must be strongly rejected and condemned with the contempt it deserves. Ya Nangoloh and the NSHR have both the right and duty to accurately inform the Namibian and other peace loving peoples about human rights violations by whoever and whenever such violations occur.

Human rights and democracy are foreign to Swapo and *Namibia Today* and this is why the NSHR activities are called "dangerous subversive activities."

It is also not understandable how the NSHR and Ya Nangoloh are indulging in any "dangerous subversive activities" by defending human rights principles and combating corruption which is so rampant in this country. To me such activities are duties of each and every responsible Namibian citizen.

Furthermore, it is imperative to note that the dangerous threats Swapo has made urging Ya Nangoloh to "just (to) pack and go" are a clear indication that the list that the NSHR recently produced after polling the opinion of several citizens is far away from being misleading. Other people can now see for themselves from the Swapo intimidation as published in *Namibia Today*. I ask myself what will happen to Mr ya Nangoloh if he does not "pack and go" as suggested by Swapo, especially after being accused of "indulging himself in dangerous subversive activities." Will he not be assassinated like Shevanyenga?

Swapo must know that they and their government will be held fully responsible for anything happening to Ya Nangoloh and other human rights defenders in this country

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