

War Is Good Money Wasted

I WOULD like to share my genuine concern with regard to our Namibian Defence Force's involvement in the costly and ruthless Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with my fellow Namibians. How long will it take us as taxpayers to realise that our scarce resources cannot afford to pay for this war? We shouldn't forget that it took Zimbabwe 20 years to realise that the government was destroying the economy and that no significant economic progress was taking place.

Why are we silent while our sons and daughters are dying in the DRC and our scarce resources are being spent to protect the economic interests of certain opportunists in this country? Are we happy that this is happening? Silence is dangerous and now is the time for us as Namibians to take our

stand and speak out against the DRC war as well as the Angolan conflict.

The Government tells us that our forces are in the DRC at the invitation of that country's legitimate government. What does the Government mean by the term 'legitimate'? To my understanding this means 'in accordance with the law' and the DRC government was not legally elected by the DRC masses. Or is our Government in a position to reveal to the world when these democratic elections took place in that country, who contested them and by how many votes the president of that country won? As far as I am concerned, no such elections took place and therefore it is incorrect to call the DRC government 'legitimate'. The NDF is fighting in the DRC at the invitation of an illegitimate government.

The DRC war is costing taxpayers millions of dollars each day, while

the people here are feeling the pains and hardships of living in poverty. Our hospitals don't have enough medicines and pensioners are still crying because of the paltry pensions they receive. The Government says it doesn't have enough money for all these needs, but how does it afford to pay the DRC war expenses?

I am not saying the Government should not be involved in the war, but it should be involved with the aim of finding a solution to the conflict. Being militarily involved won't solve anything and could only complicate matters. Why did our Government not rather act as a mediator in the conflict? When are we, as Africans, going to start solving our problems peacefully through political dialogue and diplomacy? History has shown that you can't easily win a war with a gun, and the Angolan situation is an example of this. The Kasikili dispute between

Namibia and Botswana is one of the good examples of a peaceful resolution to a dispute.

With regard to the Angolan conflict, it is very disturbing that the Government allowed the Angolan armed forces (FAA) to operate from our soil. Innocent villagers are being robbed of their belongings, injured and murdered. The tourism industry has been severely affected and the economy as a whole feels the pain of the Government's decision. I am aware that the conflict in Angola posed security concerns for Namibia but why did our Government have to choose sides in the conflict? Our Government claimed that it had invited Savimbi several times to discuss the conflict, but how logical is it to invite someone to negotiate when you have already taken sides?

I think that it is high time that the Government reconsidered its position with regard to the involvement in these two costly

conflicts. We have been silent for too long and can no longer afford to be quiet any longer. Enough is enough. I believe in the principles of democracy and that we have the potential to solve our conflicts through diplomacy, political dialogue and peaceful settlements.

We as Africans have been in wars for centuries. Now we are in the 21st century and I think that economic development and social progress should top our political agenda, not civil wars and conflicts. We need to focus on education to develop and build our war-devastated continent, we need to get our priorities right.

Let's sit around the fire like our ancestors used to and talk like civilised people. Africans, we are on our own and whatever decision we take will determine our future and those of generations to come, so let's be wise.

Dennis U Zaire
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