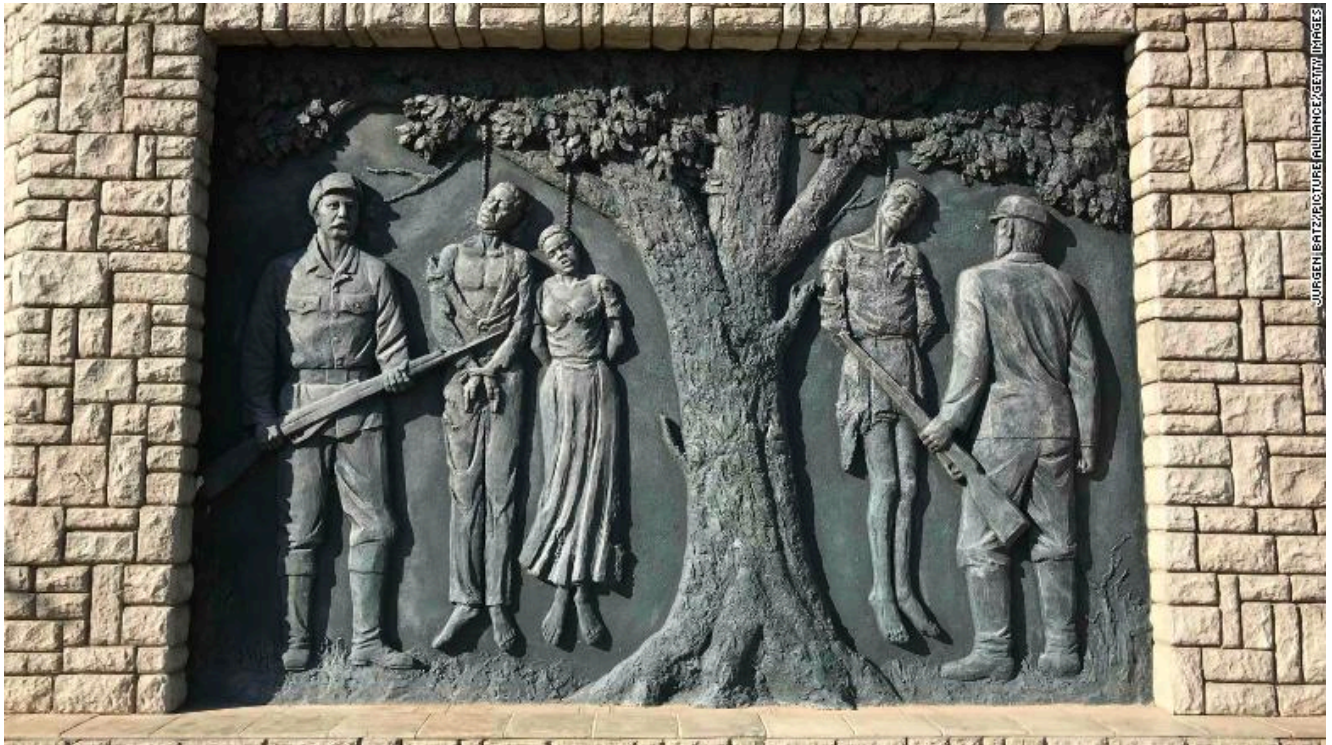


Germany will pay Namibia \$1.3bn as it formally recognizes colonial-era genocide



A memorial to the genocide of the Herero and Nama (1904-1907) committed by German colonial troops in the Namibian capital Windhoek. The inscription translates: “Your blood nourishes our freedom.”

(CNN) More than 100 years after the crimes committed by the German colonial power in what is now Namibia, Germany has formally recognized the atrocities committed against the Herero and Nama ethnic groups as genocide.

Germany will support Namibia and the descendants of the victims with €1.1 billion (\$1.3 billion) for reconstruction and development and ask for forgiveness for the “crimes of German colonial rule,” German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in a statement on Friday.

“Our goal was and is to find a common path to genuine reconciliation in memory of the victims. This includes naming the events of the German colonial period in what is now Namibia, and in particular the atrocities in the period from 1904 to 1908, without sparing or glossing over them. We will now also officially call these

events what they were from today's perspective: a genocide," Maas said. The Namibian government saw the formal acceptance of the atrocities as genocide as a key step in the process of reconciliation and reparation, Namibian presidential press secretary Alfredo Hengari told CNN on Friday.



Related article: [Namibia president says Germany's reparation offer for colonial-era mass killings 'not acceptable'](#)

"These are very positive developments in light of a very long process that has been accelerated over the past five years. People will never forget this genocide; they live with it. And this is an important process in terms of healing those wounds," he said.

Victims group reject deal

However, victim groups have rejected the deal. Vekuii Rukoro, the Paramount Chief of Herero people, former attorney general, and member of parliament told CNN that they were not part of the discussion with the German government.

"Is this the kind of reparation that we are supposed to be excited about? This is just public relations. This is a sellout job by the Namibian government. The government has betrayed the cause of my people," he said.

Rukoro said that Herero and Nama victim groups expect monetary reparations. He said reparations didn't need to go to individual people, but should be in the form of a collective payment to the descendants of those killed and pushed off their land during the genocide.



German troops killed up to 80,000 of Herero and Nama people in what is now Namibia between 1904 and 1908 in response to an anti-colonial uprising.

He added that the German president is not welcome in the southern African country.

“The president of Germany isn’t welcome here as far as victim communities are concerned. He is persona non grata,” he said.

A bloody conflict

German troops killed up to 80,000 of Herero and Nama people in the southern African country between 1904 and 1908 in response to an anti-colonial uprising, according to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

According to historians, the bloody conflict happened when the Herero indigenous people revolted against colonial troops over land seizures. Germany, which today gives development aid to Namibia, offered its first formal apology for the conflict in 2004.

Both countries had been in talks since 2015 to negotiate compensation for the massacre by German colonial forces. Maas said in his statement that representatives of the Herero and Nama communities were “closely involved” in the negotiations on the Namibian side.

“The crimes of German colonial rule have long burdened relations with Namibia. There can be no closing of the book on the past. However, the recognition of guilt and our request for apology is an important step towards coming to terms with the crimes and shaping the future together,” Maas said.

German media is reporting that an official request for forgiveness will be made by

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at a ceremony in the Namibian parliament.

“A decision on a possible trip by the Federal President will be made after the governments have reached a formal agreement and in close consultation with the Namibian side,” a spokesperson at the office of the Federal President told CNN.

The announcement comes a day after French President Emmanuel Macron publicly acknowledged France’s “overwhelming responsibility” in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and said only the survivors could give “the gift of forgiveness.”

In 1994, around 800,000 mainly ethnic Tutsis were killed by Hutu militias supported by the Rwandan government. France has been accused of failing to prevent the genocide and of supporting the Hutu regime, even after the massacres had started.



Related article: Macron seeks forgiveness for France’s role in Rwanda genocide, but stops short of apology

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<https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/28/africa/germany-recognizes-colonial-genocide-namibia-intl/index.html>

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