



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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MEDIA RELEASE

RESPONSE ON SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST THE NAMIBIA DEFENCE FORCE REGARDING THE ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF FARM ETIRO BY FARMERS FROM ERONGO REGION

1. The media, especially the electronic and social media, has been awash with fake news of allegations levelled against the members of the Namibia Defence Force (NDF) in the way they handled the illegal occupation of Farm Etiro, which is a property of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), by farmers from Erongo Region. They alleged that soldiers, wearing balaclavas, beat up and detained farmers, resulting in one victim having his arm broken. These allegations are serious and can therefore not be left unchallenged.

2. The said farmers have been grazing their cattle, for almost two (2) months, and have even erected accommodation structures and kraals in the corridor between Kranzberg and Karibib in the same area where Farm Etiro is situated. The occupation of that corridor was never challenged until the farmers started trespassing on MOD property (Farm Etiro). They did so by bringing down the fence during the night to create passage for their cattle into the property. This has so far happened for four (4) consecutive days. The soldiers were then left with no option but to drive the cattle out of the farm in the mornings and urge the farmers to refrain from illegally occupying the property, which is a punishable offence. The case of trespassing was then reported to the Namibian Police (NAMPOL) who acted promptly to maintain law and order.

3. This morning, the soldiers had a meeting with the farmers in the presence of NAMPOL where they agreed to the following:

- a. The farmers to clear from the corridor in the vicinity of Farm Etiro by 12 July 2019;

- b. The farmers to start removing their cattle from Farm Etiro and also to remove all the kraals by 12 July 2019;
- c. The farmers to remove their accommodation structures such as corrugated irons and tents by 12 July 2019; and
- d. NDF and NAMPOL members to continue monitoring the implementation of the agreed points.

4. The MOD hereby confirms that no weapon was used and no beating or detention of any sort was made in the process of restraining the farmers from trespassing on MOD property. MOD further confirms that the behaviors of some of the farmers were unbecoming as some attempted to physically assault the members of the NDF, but the members maintained their cool in the face of those provocations. Further that foul language and insults were used against the members of the NDF by some of the farmers even in the presence of the Leader of the Official Opposition, whose presence seemed to have fuelled the farmers to misbehave.

5. The members of the NDF are reasonable human beings and fully understand the negative effects of the drought situation. They sympathise with the farmers and all nationals who are negatively affected by drought, and this is the reason they are participating in drought relief distribution in all 14 Regions of this country. The soldiers also know the existence of laws, rules and regulations that protect ownership of properties in this country, under which same laws; rules and regulations Farm Etiro is also protected. The soldiers will therefore not condone any illegal occupation of any land meant for the defence of this country by anybody regardless of who they are and their status in the society.

6. The MOD is therefore warning the public out there that government properties are also protected like private properties. The NDF is a constitutional creation and is established in accordance with the Act of Parliament. Its roles and resource requirements are well articulated in the Defence Act. Land is one of the resources required for the operational preparedness of the NDF, and that is the reason farm lands are acquired. MOD will therefore not condone illegal occupation of state land reserved for defence purpose, and will do everything in its power 'legally' to prevent such unlawful act.

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