18 die during Easter Holidays

At least 18 people were killed during the Easter Holidays as a result of road accidents which happened between 1 – 5 May. Nine of the 18 people died between Okahandja and Otjwarongo in Otjozondjupa Region.

The Police have once again warned and appealed to motorists to consider their fatigue and rest before driving long distances, to be courteous and patient when driving on public roads, to strongly adhere to road traffic signs and consider blind spots when overtaking.

Police Inspector-General, Lt General Sebastian Ndeitunga, has expressed Nampol’s heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the bereaved families of those who have lost their lives during the Easter Holidays. He appealed to motorists to take all necessary precautions throughout the year.

Passengers have also been urged and reminded to be vigilant and warn drivers on their driving and bad driving habits. People should also adhere to road traffic signs and avoid crossing roads at undesignated points.

“It is a civic responsibility of every citizen to ensure road safety at all times,” said Deputy Commissioner, Hophnhi Hamufungu, Nampol’s Head of Public Relations Division. “Hence, strict adherence to road rules and regulations is of paramount importance.”

Some of those killed were hit by cars while crossing roads, while some jumped off from cars when drivers lost control of their vehicles. Among them was Lylie Nanghelow Velikoshi, who died on the Werda/ Kamanjab road on Saturday last week.

The driver apparently drove off the road and in an attempt to get back on the road, Velikoshi jumped head-on with a truck between Okahandja and Otjwarongo. Nine people died on the spot.

Two members of the Namibia Defence Force, NDF, were killed in this horrific car accident in which three vehicles were involved shortly after a deadly Easter Holidays, which claimed 18 lives. The accident happened near Omati's Army Base on the B1 Road.

\[Image\]

Professor Peter Katjavivi

He served in that capacity for several years before he was sent on diplomatic missions as Namibia’s ambassador to several countries in Europe. At UNAM, he was replaced by Professor Lazarus Hangała, the current Vice Chancellor.

Professor Katjavivi’s second last appointment was at the National Planning Commission, NPC, where he served as its Executive General. It was there that President Hifikepunye Pohamba appointed him to the National Assembly, among the six nominees appointed.

\[Image\]

Leaked video

WikiLeaks posed a security threat due to published information potentially being of use to “foreign intelligence and security services, foreign military forces, foreign insurgents, and foreign terrorist groups.”

On July 12, 2007, US troops and resistance fighters clashed in Baghdad. Reuters’ employees Noor-Eeldeen and Chuga were investigating when they were seen by US helicopter gunships among a group of about a dozen men, one or two of whom appeared to be carrying rifles. The occupying forces made no attempt to verify whether the men were civilians carrying legally-owned weapons—Iraqi households are allowed to have one registered AK-47 rifle—or establish the identities of the other unarmed men. After radiating a report to their superiors, US gunners received permission to kill everyone in the group.

The incident appeared to be one of several indiscriminate attacks. Ahmad Sahib, an Agence France-Presse photographer who was a few blocks away, has reported: “It looked like the American helicopters were firing against any gathering in the area, because when I got out of my car and started taking pictures, people gathered and an American helicopter fired a few rounds, but they hit the houses nearby and we ran for cover.”

Just before the Reuters’ journalists and the men they were covering fled the scene, the Apache gunners apparently mistook Namir Noor-Eeldeen’s camera, which was slung over his shoulder, for a rocket-propelled grenade launcher (RPG). After the first burst of gunfire, involving about 300 rounds, the troops congratulated each other: “Oh, yes, at last, we planted a bomb. Nice... Good shoot... Thank you.”

The video footage then zooms in on Saeed Chuga, who was badly wounded and screaming in pain. One soldier in the Apache says, “Come on, buddy... All you gotta do is pick up a weapon,” hoping to be able to kill him under military rules of engagement.

Shortly after this, a van stops in the area and unarmed Iraqis get out to help Chuga and the other wounded, pick them up and trying to move them into their vehicle. It was later reported that the Iraqi driver of the van was a local man who had originally taken his children to a tutoring session. After reporting that people were “picking up the bodies,” the Apache gunners received permission to “engage.” Another sustained burst of gunfire followed, killing Chuga, a man trying to help him, and seriously wounding a boy and a girl sitting in the front seat of the vehicle.

When US troops on the ground discover the children, the helicopter gunners respond with indifference. “Well it’s their fault for bringing their kids into a battle,” one says. Another replies: “That’s right.”

After initially ordering the children to be evacuated to a US military hospital for emergency treatment, the troops on the ground were told to hand them over to Iraqi police who were then to take them to a Baghdad hospital. Despite suffering chest and arm bullet wounds, both children survived. Their mother, however, has reportedly received no compensation for the death of her husband or ongoing medical expenses for her children.

After the evacuation of the wounded at the scene of the massacre, one of the troops laughs as he sees a US tank drive over one of the bodies of those initially killed: “I think they just drove over a body... Hey hey! Yeah!... Maybe it was just a visual illusion, but it looked like it... Well, they’re dead, so...”

Towards the end of the unbridged video footage, the Apache fire three Hellfire missiles into an apartment complex after reporting that gunfire had been fired from there. Julian Assange, WikiLeaks co-founder, told Democracy Now: “We have fresh evidence from Baghdad that there were three families living in that apartment complex, many of whom were killed, including women. And we sent a team down there to collect that evidence... Innocent bystanders walking down the street are also killed in that attack.”

The footage provides a rare first-hand glimpse of the military’s recurring war crimes committee in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion. Consistent with all colonial-style wars of occupation, US troops are brutalised, desensitised to violence, and encouraged to regard the local population with racist indifference and hostility.

The US ruling elite regarded the invasion as a means of utilising its military might to take control over a large part of the Middle East’s critical energy resources, thereby gaining an advantage over rival powers in Europe and Asia. From this decision to wage a war of aggression—what was defined by the Nuremberg tribunals as the “supreme international crime”—has followed innumerable atrocities leading to the deaths of an estimated one million Iraqis. The images depicted in the video footage are typical of what was carried on a daily basis in Iraq and what is now being inflicted on the people of Afghanistan and in the border regions of Pakistan under President Barack Obama’s offensive.

The Iraqi Journalists Union yesterday demanded a criminal investigation into the killing of the Reuters’ employees. “This is another crime added to the crimes of the US forces against Iraqi journalists and civilians,” union leader Mouayyad I. al-ami said. “I call upon the government to take a firm stance against the criminals who killed the journalists.”

According to Reporters Without Borders, 221 journalists and media assistants have been killed in Iraq since the 2003 invasion. In many cases there is overwhelming evidence of the US forces deliberately targeting journalists. It does not appear that this was the case in the 2007 killings of the two Reuters’ reporters.

However, senior US military figures subsequently used the incident to warn journalists against attempting to cover the Iraq war independently of the occupying forces’ authority. Responding to questions about Noor-Eeldeen and Chuga’s deaths, Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman last year declared: “We think the safest way to cover these operations is to be embedded with US forces.”