‘No hope for RDP,’ say former members

By Asser Ntinda

As the day of reckoning gets closer and with several disillusioned people leaving the Rally for Democracy and Progress, RDP, Namibia’s newest political baby on the block faces an uphill battle to make any significant impact on Namibian political landscape as earlier claimed in the coming National Assembly and Presidential elections, now just four weeks away.

Several people who have recently deserted from RDP and joined SWAPO Party say the ones they have left behind are terribly disillusioned and uncertain about the future of RDP. They are on the way back to join SWAPO Party as well, they say. Those who have already joined the ruling Party predict that after the November elections, RDP will never be the same again.

“When we joined RDP early last year,” said one former RDP member from Windhoek West, “we thought and really believed that SWAPO would never be the same again without Hidipo Hamutenya, who had left it at the end of 2007 to form RDP. There were many stories going on, deliberately spread to make Hidipo’s defection a big blow to SWAPO.

“If a person of Hidipo’s caliber, armed with the influential positions he claimed he had held within the Party, could resign from it, then, so we thought, something must seriously be wrong within the SWAPO Party. We followed the stream, sang any song everybody else in RDP was singing.

“We were told that SWAPO would break up. And after that, RDP was going to be the only party many people would join, including SWAPO members and leaders. Personally was told and convinced that there would be no SWAPO after Hidipo had left it. Guess who told me! Lapaka Weyada. She did all she could to convince me and a few of my friends to join RDP. That is how we ended up being RDP members.”

Lapaka is an NBC Oshiwambo announcer and a member of the central committee of RDP. She is also on the RDP parliamentary list for the National Assembly elections.

The former RDP member said that she and her colleagues were misled. A year after RDP was formed, they could not see any sign of SWAPO Party breaking up. They only saw it grow, with many people who hitherto were not really politically active now coming out into the open, displaying SWAPO Party colours in a way they have never seen. The public display of flags shocked them.

“Everywhere we went, we were shunned and avoided like dogs with rabies,” she said.

RDP was launched on 17 November 2007 in Windhoek with a view to “challenging” SWAPO.

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