

Naruseb

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her farm, as a result access to main road to some is denied.

Responding to the farmers queries Alpheus Naruseb urged the farmers to work together in order to solve some of the problems together. Of course, the minister agreed with the farmers on issues that the Association rose. He explained that when he took a regional tour where he encountered

border issue and the properties in some plots which one could not identify as to who it belong as is being said by the farmers, and he said that will receive his immediate attention.

Animal belong to the state, the law does not allow resettlement farmers to own game, due to the size of the farms allocated to an individual, if government allow farmers to own game in such small places, later there is no single game the whole area, for they will be disturbed by the human movement, explained Naruseb.

He urged to co-exist and allow each other to pass through their area without any restriction and share as people who are in one area.

The Minister advised the Association to be patient, while preparation are being finalized for decentralization, adding that soon each region will have an office fully equipped with enough manpower, in order to resourcefully provide all the necessary assistant the region. The minister was accompanied by his permanent secretary Lidwina Shapwa.



Cde Sem Komomeya well know "Lobito" and Syria Laundila Lukas tied a knot, they are now husband and wife



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> **The Admission Permits** for JSC and NSSC Higher and Ordinary level examinations will be available at centres from **15 September 2009**.

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Zoom In



By Asser Ntinda

As the National Council prepares to wrap up its final arguments on the merits and demerits of the Namibia Communications Bill, concerted efforts are being mounted by some unscrupulous elements and NGOs to stop the Bill from being passed into law.

These elements' shared objective is one – to ensure that Namibia does not do legally what other countries do legally, that is to use the world's fastest developing information and communications technology to detect and avert, among others, criminal activities on time and spare Namibians the pains of what could easily be detected and averted on time.

The National Assembly, Namibia's greatest debating chamber, passed the Bill a few months ago and sent it to the National Council, the Second House of Review, as per procedures of Namibia's Parliamentary system. The National Council extensively discussed, scrutinized and debated the Bill. In its wisdom, it chose to refer the Bill to the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security, which, in the end, also thought it wise to organize public hearings on the Bill.

Concerns raised in the National Council as read out by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Councillor John Hakaye, were mainly technical, and were promptly answered by Information and Communications Technology Minister, Cde Joel Kaapanda, and Board members of the Commission who attended the hearings. The story simply needed to end there. It did not, unfortunately.

Arguably, the public hearings were also meant to give members of the public a chance to air their views on the Bill – a commendable move indeed. But Namibians understand the importance of the Bill and trust that their representatives in Parliament would not let them down. Thus, only a few individuals attended the public hearings, leaving only an assortment of uppity whites and embedded leaders of some nongovernmental organizations, NGOs, to make noise before the Committee.

The notable absence of many members of the public irked Gwen Lister, Editor of The Namibian, to the bone. She was quick, as she always is anyway, to conclude that the "public hearings were not properly advertised" to allow for more public participation. She missed the point completely. After more than 24 years of "Telling It Like It Is," Gwen still dismally fails to understand the psychological behaviour of the people of Namibia.

Members of the public, who have, more than anybody else, borne the blunt and ghastly consequences of organized crimes, did not attend the public hearings because they understood and appreciated the importance of the Bill, and certainly not because the "public hearings were not widely advertised in order for more public participation to be possible."

With members of the public absent from the public hearings, some media houses and NGOs took it upon themselves to block the Bill from being passed, or to have Chapter Six removed. If Gwen thought she would have a big following at the hearings, she must have been shocked to see the opposite. Chapter Six deals with interceptions, Gwen's only bone of contention as far as this Bill is concerned. Suddenly, Gwen repackaged herself into a constitutional expert, "urging" the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security not to pass the Bill at all. She argued that the Bill "contravenes" the Constitution, particularly the Bill of Rights. Interestingly, more than 80 per cent of the current Members of the National Assembly, which passed the Bill recently, were the ones who drafted and adopted Namibia's Constitution.

To whip up emotions, Gwen handed to the committee a copy of an interception order issued by the then Security Police against her mail, pointing out to the Committee "the perils of forgetting the past at the expense of the future." Just look at who is teaching us from the past! Gwen has always been quick to point out our shortcomings and "lack of delivery on the promises" we have made to the people as a government, but she has never appreciated us whenever we point out that we have done better here and there than the former apartheid regime, always reminding us that we should not compare ourselves with the former colonial regime because it "it was illegal, brutal and never cared about the people."

A good point indeed! But, it now seems, it was only good when it suited her then. Gwen of that time no longer lives. We now have a new Gwen who has found it opportunistic enough to use the past – the same past which she has never wanted us to benchmark our successes against what apartheid South Africa had failed to do – to raise unnecessary alarms and incite fear because she is not comfortable with the Bill. Gwen should not compare us with the former apartheid colonial regime because we are "responsible, elected and do care about the people."

If it is not good for us to benchmark our successes against what the former colonial regime had failed to do, it should equally not be good for Gwen to come full circle and raise unnecessary alarms and fears quoting the same past and using examples from the colonial apartheid regime to condemn us because it was "illegal, brutal and uncaring." To condemn us for doing so and exonerate herself for doing exactly the same is double standard at best, and selective morality at worst.

If Gwen has skeletons in her cupboard, she has all the reasons to fear and worry about the Bill. But that is her burden, not ours. For us, national security and national interest come first, Gwen's fears and alarms last. If it hurts, so be it. We are not reinventing the wheel here. The greatest democracies in the world, which she is so fond of using as examples, have more sophisticated, highly wired and technologically equipped interception centres.

In the first place, the Communications Commission Bill is not a spy Bill, as Gwen would want the public to believe. The phrase "spy bill" was deliberately coined by Gwen and her newspaper to instil fear and whip up emotions against the Bill. The Bill, in its current form and content, has greater national value than her myopic and short-sighted views in the greater arrangement of national security and national interest.

As Gwen was putting together her spurious arguments before the Standing Committee, Britain was sending three Al-Qaeda convicted terrorists to life imprisonment. They were convicted last week on terrorist charges as they plotted to blow up, in midair, one by one, seven transcontinental airlines mainly destined for the US. They were arrested with explosive liquids, disguised as soft-drinks, enough to make 20 powerful homemade bombs to carry out their mission. Part of the pieces of evidence that worked heavily against them was intercepted e-mails through which they discussed and shared strategies on how to carry out their plot. The ensuing disaster could have been catastrophic and ghastly. The entire airline industry could have come to a standstill.

Yet, in the name of "privacy and civil liberties," Gwen says Namibia should not intercept to detect criminal activities. Forget about the noisy Media Institute of Southern Africa and the endless ranting of National Society for Human Rights, NSHR's Phil Ya Nangoloh during the public hearings which ended last week Wednesday. We should remember that various entities have been hired and lobbied to sustain a campaign and create a negative climate on, about and around the Bill and to put up a coordinated stance against it at the expense of national security and national interest.

The arguments so far advanced against the Bill are essentially spurious. We must therefore have the courage and moral conviction to demand an end to this insulting stereo-typed notion that we, as black people governing ourselves, cannot responsibly be trusted with the responsibility of safeguarding and sustaining our national security and national interest in the manner and ways we see fit.

The notion that the Bill is "open to abuse" and that we are prone to abuse, venality and mismanagement must be trashed and shredded with the contempt it deserves. This is not a defensive overdrive, but a well-thought out and rationale reaction to what obviously amounts to nothing more than a mere fishing expedition whose aim is to find abuse and dishonesty Gwen wishes should have happened.

We have put in place checks and balances to ensure that there is no abuse. There will be no interception without a warrant issued by a High Court judge. And those who will man interception centres will be vetted by the Namibia Security Commission, whose members are men and women of integrity and honesty. Namibians out there expect the Bill to pass through. At stake is our national security and national interest. On those two key necessities, there can be no compromise. We owe it to those Namibians who laid down their lives in the cause of Namibia's independence struggle for Namibia to be free. We owe it to succeeding generations to whom we should pass on a peaceful and stable Namibia.