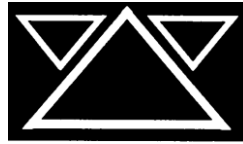


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PRESS STATEMENT

19 October 2020

The LAC objects to any characterisation of Namibian voters by race or ethnicity. Not all white voters have the same opinions, any more than all black voters or voters from any particular ethnic group. After the pain of Namibia's past, surely every person in Namibia has the right to be viewed as an individual rather than being judged on the basis of race.

We believe that the President's recent statement about white voters violates the provision of the Racial Discrimination Prohibition Act 26 of 1991 which forbids any person from publicly using any language with intent to threaten or insult any person or group of persons on the ground that such persons belong to a particular racial group (section 11(1)(a)).

No person is above the law, including the President. If he wants to criticise voters who hold a particular point of view, he is welcome to do so – but he is not free to base that criticism on race.

Furthermore, every Namibia citizen has the Constitutional right “to participate in peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and policies of the Government”, “to form and join political parties” and “to participate in the conduct of public affairs, whether directly or through freely chosen representatives” (Art 17). This right does not extend only to those persons who support the ruling party. Voting for the political party of one's choice is not “war” against any other party, it is the democratic right of citizens of all races.

The President has taken an oath to uphold, protect and defend the Namibian Constitution and to ensure justice for all the inhabitants of the Republic of Namibia. These responsibilities must supersede any political party loyalties. This means that the President may not attempt to intimidate or suppress any group of voters, regardless of what party they support.

Thirty years after independence, in a nation which has managed to hold a series of peaceful elections from independence up to now, it is profoundly disturbing to hear such race-based incitement from the President. We call upon him to retract his statement in order to set an example to all Namibians that all persons are equal before the law and that no persons may be discriminated against on the grounds of race.

Toni Hancox
DIRECTOR

Trustees of the Legal Assistance Trust:

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