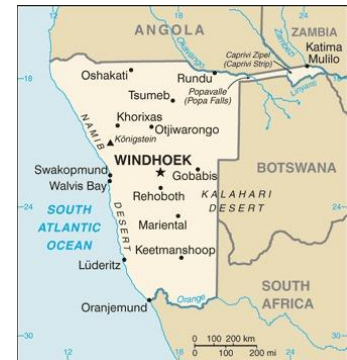


Genocide of The Herero and Nama, 1904-1907

What

The genocide of the Herero and Nama in Africa, perpetrated by Germany during the Second Reich, is largely unknown. Germany had colonial control of an area known as German Southwest Africa. Between 1904 and 1907, German military forces committed genocide against that country's indigenous populations to gain control over the land

The German government ordered the murder of the indigenous Herero and Nama people through battle, forced starvation, forced dehydration, sexual violence, life-threatening medical experiments, and incarceration in concentration camps. These actions became the blueprint for Germany's strategies to exterminate Jews and other targeted populations during the Holocaust of World War II, 1933-1945.



Namibia

While record-keeping from the period makes it difficult to quantify the total loss of life, it is estimated that 80% of the Herero people and 50% of the Nama people perished over the three-year genocide.

Where

Namibia is located in southern Africa and is bordered by South Africa, Botswana, Angola, Zambia, and the Atlantic Ocean. The area was a German settler colony, and many Germans moved there in search of farmland at a time of scarcity of arable land in Germany.

In 1915, during World War I, South Africa began a military occupation of the country, officially ending Germany's colonial rule. South Africa maintained apartheid-style control over Namibia until Namibian independence was won in 1990 after extended and brutal conflict.

How

In 1904, leaders of the Herero attacked a German fort in the town of Okahandja in protest of German policies. Later that year, Nama leaders also organized an armed resistance to German rule. The German backlash was swift and cruel.

German colonial institutions reinforced an ideology of racial hierarchy before, during, and after the genocide. This ideology justified German control over much of Namibia's arable land, as well as the mass killings of indigenous groups that either directly resisted Germany's control or simply were occupying land that Germans wanted.

Many of the Herero and Nama people were removed from their land and sent to concentration camps where they were forced to perform hard labor with little food and water. The methods of oppression used in these camps, as well as the racialized justification for violence and exploitation, were subsequently used by the Nazis in the Holocaust of the Jews thirty years later and were, in fact, led by many of the same perpetrators.

Response

Very little has been done in response to one of the most complete genocides in history. A significant portion of Namibia's land is still owned by the white descendants of German colonialists who perpetrated the genocide. Herero and Nama genocide descendants remain among the poorest and most disadvantaged people in Namibia.

Only recently, with Namibian independence in 1990, did the country begin grappling with steps for restitution. On April 28, 2021, Germany formally recognized the genocide and announced that it will pay Namibia over \$1.3 billion in reconstruction and development aid. While this is a positive step, Namibian activists and Herero cultural leaders have rejected the deal. They have called for Germany to make more direct reparations and to return stolen land. There is also dissension between Herero and Nama descendants' organizations and the Namibian government regarding the rightful representation of the descendants' voices in the negotiations with the German government.

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