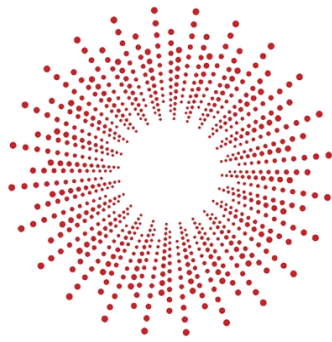




Namibian
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Genocide and Reparatory Justice

Call for Papers: Volume 6 (August 2026-September 2027)

Deadline for Abstract: 30 September 2026

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German colonial genocide and the dispossession of indigenous groups in Namibia at the turn of the 20th century laid the foundation for the conditions of poverty, and inequality in contemporary Namibia. Descendants of affected communities are seeking reparatory justice and have initiated both grass-roots and formal processes for cultural, spiritual and material restitution.

In 2006, the Namibian Parliament passed a motion that clearly sets out the conditions for the redress for the genocide committed by German colonial forces between 1904 and 1908. The resolution reflects on German extermination of the OvaHerero, Nama-Damara and San groups, on the loss of land, property and wealth, loss of dignity, cultural and economic dislocation, impoverishment, sexualised and gender-based violence as well as the psychological trauma suffered during the German colonial occupation. The resolution commits the Namibian Government to the pursuit of reparations for the descendants of the affected groups (Republic of Namibia, 2006).

Only in 2015 did the German government finally concede that the colonial warfare that culminated in a genocide. Their admission initiated bilateral state negotiations, more than a century after the atrocities occurred. The Transnational Congress on the Ovaherero and Nama Genocides in Berlin in 2016 called on the Namibian government to affirm the rights of the affected communities, to pursue restorative justice for the genocide, and for reparations for the material and immaterial damage incurred by the Ovaherero and Nama victims of genocide war crimes as well as their descendants. It further called for the representatives of these communities to be included in direct negotiations with the German government (Transnational Congress on the Ovaherero and Nama Genocide, 2016).

Despite political commitments to advance reparatory justice by the Namibian and German governments, for the affected communities, meaningful redress and reparations remain unresolved and contested. Complex structural realities in Namibia, shaped by the overlapping histories of dispossession and colonialism, delimited pathways for transformative justice and led to uneven national politics of remembrance and repair (Hamrick and Duschinski, 2018). At

the same time, despite calls for inclusion, the reparation negotiations have been marked by asymmetric power relations and focused on bilateral state-to-state relations, to the exclusion and meaningful participation of victim communities and their representatives (Melber, 2024, 2025).

A key outcome of the bilateral negotiations between the German and Namibian government is a draft Joint Declaration (JD) of 2021. Through the JD, efforts at so-called ‘reconciliation’ have focused primarily on a state-centred approach of reconstruction and development support. The JD also fell short of an unconditional recognition of genocide. The document excluded notions of restorative justice and reparations to avoid legal precedent for German atrocities committed globally (European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) (2021). Due to multiple disagreements and these exclusions, the JD’s legitimacy is undermined, and it was never formally adopted. Most of the affected communities and their representatives have rejected the JD, including due to their exclusion from the direct negotiations (Melber, 2024, 2025). During her 2026 State of the Nation Address, President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah stated that the JD has been reviewed and will be tabled before the National Assembly prior to the signing.

Reparations should meet international human rights standards as set out in the UN’s *Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law*. In addition, reparations should be proportional to the gravity of the violations and the harm suffered. In addition to symbolic gestures like apologies, memorialisation and commemorations, material resources should be availed to effect reparations in the form of restitution, compensation and rehabilitation to the satisfaction of affected groups (UN Human Rights Office, 2005). An agreement for development aid does not meet these requirements and hence becomes a lost opportunity for reparative justice.

Despite its limitations, the German-Namibian case is the first of its kind globally. It can offer crucial insights to counter ongoing global genocide denialism and genocidal violence due to colonialism. It also represents a precedent for other colonial powers to follow and connects a movement of former colonies beyond Africa, such as the Caribbean, in seeking reparations (CARICOM, 2026).

This has given rise to the formation of transnational networks of solidarity and future-building that provide alternative platforms for “restitutionary work” (Rassool and Gibbon 2024). In Namibia, there are also ongoing struggles and negotiations for the restitution of ancestral and human remains, and looted objects from Germany to Namibia, generating questions on the ethics of cooperation and exchange in a context of unequal power relations (Förster, 2020). Thematic issues around genocide and reparatory justice open pathways for progress while harnessing efforts towards desirable outcomes.

This call for papers invites critical engagements with the question of genocide, reparatory justice and restitution in Namibia with a particular focus on the German colonial wars and genocide. We invite contributions that go beyond the official narratives and that include silenced, marginalised and/or nuanced perspectives on the processes of reparation, restitution, reconciliation, and redress, and the legacies and afterlives of genocide, colonial injustices and intergenerational trauma. Contributions that reflect on the politics of cultural and social memory, and the continuation of colonial structures in the present, are also encouraged.

Thematic Areas:

- Genocide, epistemicide and ethnic cleansing and during and after the German Colonial Genocide in Namibia
- German Colonial Genocide, South African Colonialism and overlapping and entangled histories of dispossession
- Dispossession, intergenerational poverty and inequality
- Identity, cultural erasure, intergenerational trauma and healing
- Transnational memory, colonial injustices and colonial amnesia
- Genocide and land restitution
- Art and cultural interventions and restorative justice
- Memorialisation, remembering and national identity
- Decolonial, non-extractive futures
- Restorative justice and reparations
- Repatriation, restitution and the return of ancestral and human remains
- Competing/divergent understandings of justice and different dimensions of justice
- Political and legal struggles towards reparations
- Representation, self-representation and legitimacy in reparations negotiations
- The Joint Declaration
- Local and global movement building for restorative justice

Publication Schedule

- 15 September 2026: Deadline for all abstracts
- 15 October 2026: Feedback on abstracts to authors.
- 05 December 2027: Online Key Point Workshop for all scholarly article's
- 31 March 2027: First draft submission for reviews
- 29 April 2027: completion of review process.
- 28 May 2027: Reviewers' comments incorporated into the articles and final articles returned to editor.
- 30 June 2027: Finalisation of language edit
- 31 July 2027: Layout completed
- 13 August 2027: Review of Gallery Copies
- 31 August 2027: Printing completed
- September 2027: Journal Launch

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