



Federal Chancellery
Madam Chancellor
Dr. Angela Merkel

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Platz der Republik 1
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Dear Federal Chancellor,

The statements made by your Personal Representative for Africa, Günter Nooke, in an interview with the *B.Z.* of 7 October give us great cause for concern and raise a series of questions.

In the interview, Mr Nooke claims that colonialism had less of a damaging impact on Africa than the Cold War and even “contributed to the continent shaking off archaic structures”. In light of the facts and the on-going process of coming to terms with the colonial era as a whole, this leaves us speechless. This view of the continent implies that, prior to colonisation, African societies were entirely “backwards” and needed violent salvation by a European civilisation that assumed to be more advanced. That is at its core racist. This half-sentence on its own disqualifies Mr Nooke as the Federal Government’s Representative for Africa.

His long list of stereotypical characteristics of an African continent that is “other”, shaped by “tribal leaders”, “ethnic groups” and “traditional forms of behaviour” reinforce this impression. It is also the omissions, however, in the description and evaluation of colonialism that alarm us. While Mr Nooke does mention the slave transport organised under colonialism, he fails to acknowledge the millions of victims of colonialism’s wars, forced labour, displacement and random acts of violence. He omits the opportunity to condemn the genocide of the Herero and Nama people in what is now Namibia by German “*Schutztruppen*”. He says nothing about how the appalling economic and cultural after-effects of colonialism scar the African continent to this day.

Numerous people, both in Germany and abroad, have contacted us to express their shock at Mr Nooke’s comments. The aim of a critical analysis of German colonial history that is anchored within

the coalition agreement can no longer be credibly pursued with Mr Nooke as the government representative for Africa. Nor is it possible under his stewardship to hold a dialogue on equal terms with governments and civil society in Africa – one that is more urgently required than ever before for the sorely needed development of a constructive policy with our neighbours.

Chancellor, we ask that you clarify the questions raised regarding the Federal Government's view of Africa by the statements from Günter Nooke. Do you share the assessment that the colonial era contributed towards Africa "shaking off archaic structures"? To what extent do you consider historic truths to have been distorted in the comments, and the critical analysis of Germany's colonial crimes essentially put at risk? Are the proposed acquisitions of areas of African land in order to establish special economic zones in which to house refugees the official position of the Federal Government? In light of his statements, do you consider Mr Nooke to be a suitable partner for discussions with African governments and organisations? What conclusions will you draw from the statements by Günter Nooke?

We ask you to make clear the Federal Government's important commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and to the fight against racism by removing Mr Nooke from office.

Yours sincerely,



Agnieszka Brugger



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