

Election Watch X

Produced by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)

Issue No. 7 2014

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

Political tolerance means accepting and respecting the basic rights and civil liberties of persons and groups whose viewpoints differ from one's own. All citizens, including political leaders, have a responsibility to practise political tolerance in their words and actions. As a clear rejection of "might makes right," political tolerance is a key principle of democracy.

As an ideal, democracy means that members of the society should treat each other, and be treated, as equals. Underlying democracy is the acceptance and respect of the other. Democratic life is both the right to differ as well as the acceptance of such difference by all. Democracy implies respect for the plurality of views and virtues of dialogue as a means of resolving conflict.

“

I call upon all Namibians to ensure that all our laws are respected. We should ensure that election campaigns and other political activities are conducted in a peaceful atmosphere. Political support should only be gained through the power of persuasion. Provocative acts which could incite violence should be avoided at all cost. Our common aims should be the holding of credible, peaceful, free and fair elections. I therefore call upon all our people to join hands and work together to build a better society.

President Hifikepunye Pohamba

”

Political intolerance is engendered by a willingness to restrict the rights of a disliked person or group based on their differing views. It represents a threat to democracy since it discriminates against and may even silence certain parts of the population. Intolerance creates a conformist culture and a closed society, which narrows citizens' perceptions of politics and shapes their subsequent behaviour.

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF POLITICAL TOLERANCE

A culture of tolerance involves debate and dynamic exchanges of opinions and arguments, whereby people can learn from others, get closer to the truth, and benefit from a vital public life. Developing a culture of tolerance is a long



term undertaking that removes the roots of intolerance and is necessary for the democratic process.

Some of the key ingredients of a culture of tolerance are:

EDUCATION

Education and political participation can cultivate tolerance among citizens. States can help to eliminate discrimination and hatred by promoting dialogue with minority and vulnerable groups. Citizens who have more opportunities to practise and observe tolerance are more appreciative of and committed to tolerance and respect for others' rights. States can contribute to the overall democratic learning and stability by involving citizens in the democratic process and upholding the civil liberties of all groups.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

A society in which freedom of expression is not guaranteed hinders political tolerance. Open dialogue and a diversity of political opinions are made possible by and reinforce a culture of tolerance.

MEDIA

The media plays an important role in developing a culture of tolerance. States have a duty to allow a pluralistic media to flourish and present diverse and critical views. Encouraging a wide array of ideas and beliefs among individuals and institutions builds an equitable and non-discriminatory environment that enhances political life.

Adapted from material from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

“

Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference.

UN Declaration of Principles on Tolerance

”

ABOUT ELECTION WATCH

Election Watch is a bulletin containing electoral analysis and voter education that will appear regularly in the run up to the 2014 National Assembly and Presidential Elections. It is produced as a PDF download and as a printed newspaper insert. Election Watch is a project of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). It is produced with the support of the European Union and *The Namibian newspaper*.

The content of Election Watch is the sole responsibility of the IPPR.

Comments and feedback should be sent to the IPPR, PO Box 6566, Windhoek, Namibia.

Tel: (061) 240514; fax: (061) 240516; email: info@ippr.org.na. For more on Election Watch check <http://www.electionwatch.org.na>

Tolerance within political parties

Most political parties have to deal with the tension between promoting internal democracy and maintaining party discipline. Parties should be able to create an environment in which members unite around core values but are also free to express their views on policies, party structures, and party performance. Only through the crucible of debate can progress be created.

Most larger parties have internal wings or campaign groups that reflect certain policy emphases. Sometimes these groups ally themselves to certain figures in the leadership. This has not happened in a very public way in Namibia, because most of Namibia's political parties are small or still emerging from the liberation struggle era when an image of unity was seen as more important than allowing a diversity of views. However, as parties develop and become larger some divergence among members over policy issues is inevitable. These need not become factions or schisms which impair the party. On the contrary, they can enrich policy debate.

However, parties that do not cohere around certain statements and values are at risk of falling apart at some point. Therefore it is important that the leadership is able to call members to order by referring to the party's principles when debates turn fractious. This is why parties must have well-written constitutions and clearly expressed mission statements which articulate and embody their core principles and values. Party tradition and history is also important here.

People join or become active supporters of political parties for different reasons. The motives are not always purely political or idealistic. Some might join because of

peer pressure or because they feel they can gain certain advantages by being associated with a particular party. However, many will join because they identify with the party's values, policies and leadership. It is important that members are educated about the party's roots, history and tradition as well as its policy platform and current strategies.



CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Parties should allow their members leeway when it comes to the freedom to criticise policies and leaders as long as this is done in keeping with agreed rules and accepted traditions on inner-party debate. Party members and branches require breathing space to raise their concerns and problems. A party that clamps down on freedom of expression within party structures is laying the ground for further dissension

and even splits later on. However, when members or groups within the members consistently challenge the party's core values or seek to usurp the party leadership without using the appropriate democratic forums, it may be time to ask that group of members to leave or to take disciplinary action that might result in their suspension

always difficult to organise and are almost bound to result in bad publicity for the party. Hence it is important to have other options available for conflict resolution. Some of these might be informal – such as ensuring that senior members of the party are available to act as mediators in any internal dispute. It might also be possible to bring in more formal arbitrators to smooth over a conflict, before any members need to be referred to a disciplinary committee.

There are several reasons why a party may no longer be able to accept the behaviour of certain members, such as when they:

- Fundamentally oppose the party's core values
- Support other parties
- Insult and denigrate the leadership or other party members
- Refuse to follow the party's internal rules
- Refuse to work within the party's structures

In such cases, parties have the right to retain discipline. Otherwise they can lose coherence. However, it is crucial that disciplinary options are not used to crush internal debate, divergent views, and individual initiatives. After all, parties need to have internal debates and hear new ideas if they are to critically assess their policies and performance and move forward. Striking a balance between maintaining core principles and organisational coherence and enabling debate and innovation is something that all successful parties have to do.

Adapted from 'Strengthening Political Parties' – Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) 2008

It's okay to lose an election

Both winning and losing are part of politics. If your party or candidate loses an election, it's important not to over-react. Whether you won or lost, there are important lessons that can be learnt from the electoral process that has just been completed. If your party or candidate learns those lessons it's quite possible they will win next time.

Most importantly – do not think of trying to vindicate your campaign or take revenge on political rivals through violence, hate speech, or other acts of intolerance. Rather take a measured, calm approach to improving your candidate's or party's electoral fortunes. Unless there is clear evidence of fraud or other irregularities it is important to accept the result of the election rather than living 'in denial' and always believing there was a conspiracy against you. If your party is used to winning elections but on this occasion lost at the polls, it is crucial to accept that your party is fallible and that your political competitors probably ran better campaigns and were more effective in reaching out to voters.

Here are a few tips for those parties that lose but are determined to make a come back at the next electoral opportunity.

Congratulate the winner

Do this in a genuine manner rather than half-heartedly. Offer to work together where you can to improve conditions in your community and country.

Review your campaign

Try not to indulge in a blame game about what went wrong. Rather review the campaign in a positive manner with the aim of making changes before the next campaign is due.

Prepare for the future

Come up with a considered and measured plan for improving your party's or candidate's performance. Make sure it is practical and can be implemented. Set realistic targets and start to gather the resources and support you will need now rather than later.

Review your policy positions

Think about the campaign messages and policy positions that were communicated by your campaign. Consult with party members and supporters as well as communities on the ground to see how relevant they were. Have the courage to change the substance of your policy platform and the way it was communicated if necessary.

Leadership & tolerance

For political party leaders

- Develop internal democratic procedures that allow for full debate on contentious issues, rather than relying on dictates from the party executive
- Follow appropriate procedures when pursuing the suspension or expulsion of a member, including guaranteeing due process and the right of members to defend themselves
- Develop and adhere to codes of conduct that promote political tolerance, especially during the electoral period
- Open avenues for inter-party dialogue and initiatives to set example for constituents

For local politicians

- Pursue political action through dialogue and concerted action, not violent means
- Be role models for constituents by acting in a tolerant manner in negotiations and debate, respecting the opinions expressed by others
- Promote tolerance in relations with citizens and be receptive to opinions expressed by constituents
- Run electoral campaigns that are transparent and adhere to electoral codes of conduct

For civil society

- Support civic education campaigns, in particular, youth outreach
- Work with local communities and authorities to monitor and prevent hate speech, provide forums for dialogue between groups, and raise awareness about intolerance and discrimination
- Promote political participation in all its forms, such as voting, contacting elected representatives, participating in the work of political parties, signing petitions, and attending lawful demonstrations

Adapted from the Inter-Parliamentary Union

**ELECTION WATCH IS
SUPPORTED BY THE**

THE FREE PRESS OF NAMIBIA (PTY) LTD



still telling it like it is!

The European Union



Find us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/electionwatchnamibia



Follow us on Twitter

twitter.com/electionwatchnamibia



WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT TOLERANCE

"Laws alone cannot secure freedom of expression; in order that every man presents his views without penalty there must be a spirit of tolerance in the entire population."
Albert Einstein, German-born scientist and peace campaigner



"Don't be in a hurry to condemn because he doesn't do what you do or think as you think or as fast. There was a time when you didn't know what you know today."
Malcolm X, US civil rights activist



The highest result of education is tolerance.
Helen Keller



"Tolerance of intolerance is cowardice."
Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Somali author



"To view the opposition as dangerous is to misunderstand the basic concepts of democracy. To oppress the opposition is to assault the very foundation of democracy."
Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar opposition leader



For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.
Nelson Mandela, former South African President



"The golden rule of conduct is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and we shall always see truth in fragment and from different points of vision."
Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement



Don't ever let them pull you down so low as to hate them.
Booker T. Washington, African American educator and author



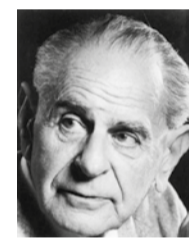
"Tolerance is the prerogative of humanity. We are all full of weaknesses and mistakes. Let us reciprocally forgive ourselves. It is the first law of nature."
Voltaire, French writer



"Ignorance and prejudice are the handmaidens of propaganda. Our mission, therefore, is to confront ignorance with knowledge, bigotry with tolerance, and isolation with the outstretched hand of generosity. Racism can, will, and must be defeated."
Kofi Annan, former UN General Secretary



We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant. We should claim that any movement preaching intolerance places itself outside the law, and we should consider incitement to intolerance and persecution as criminal."
Karl Popper, Austrian-British philosopher



NBC offers equal free airtime

The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) has pledged to allocate equal free airtime to all parties and presidential candidates registered for the upcoming elections. Parties are also free to purchase additional airtime from the NBC for further broadcasts.

In 2009 talks between the NBC and the parties about free airtime broke down after opposition parties alleged that the formula being proposed would heavily favour the ruling party.

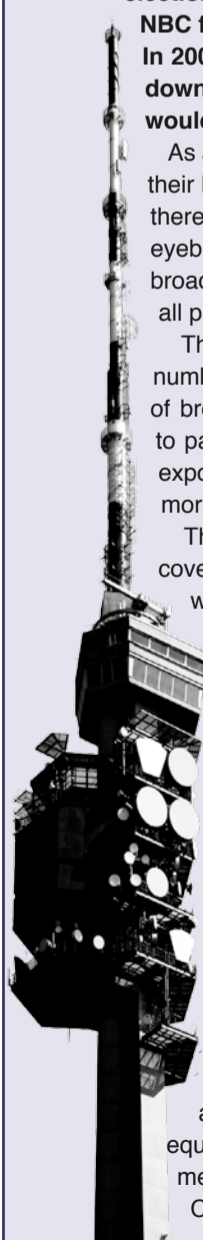
As a result, there were no free-to-air broadcasts. Swapo went on to pay for their broadcasts ahead of the 2009 election while the opposition did not and therefore did not feature on the national broadcaster. The situation raised eyebrows among some election observer missions, especially since state broadcasters are usually called on to provide equal or equitable access for all parties.

The number of broadcasts each party receives will depend on the number of parties registered for these elections combined with the number of broadcasting slots the NBC makes available. Any party that can afford to pay for further broadcasts stands to gain considerably from the greater exposure. As in 2009, it seems likely that only Swapo will be able to afford more broadcasts.

The decision to allocate broadcasts equally does not affect news coverage on the NBC's various news bulletins and programmes. This will still be decided based on the NBC's internal editorial policy and 'newsworthiness'.

Several opposition parties have expressed concern about possible bias towards the ruling party in news coverage. The NBC has a tendency to focus on rallies above any other party or candidate activities such as media conferences or other public events. This tends to favour Swapo which organises by far the most rallies countrywide.

Despite misgivings about the NBC's news coverage, parties and media freedom organisations have broadly welcomed the decision to allocate party political broadcasts on an equal basis. In many democracies, such broadcasts are allocated on a proportional basis depending on parties' support levels at the previous elections. The NBC's move is in keeping with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections which state that there should be "equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media". It is also in agreement with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance which calls on state parties to "ensure fair and equitable access by contesting parties and candidates to state controlled media during elections." Namibia has signed but not yet ratified the African Charter.



Dealing with hate speech

One of the greatest professional challenges for journalists covering an election campaign is the question of how to report inflammatory language and sentiments conveyed during political campaigns.



From a journalist's point of view, this challenge is a balancing act between two potentially conflicting ethical obligations: reporting accurately and declining to report on anything that will discriminate on racial, religious, national, gender, or other grounds. In practice, however, and while using professional reporting practices, the dilemma may be more imagined than real. Balance is usually the key. Balance involves citing differing or opposing viewpoints. It also entails placing the words of politicians in accurate contexts. Offensive words and phrases do not need to be repeated or broadcast verbatim, particularly, if they are inflammatory. Instead they can be explained in context or paraphrased.

In certain circumstances, accurate reporting of inflammatory or hateful language or images may serve to undermine intentions of the source, in this case parties or candidates. Often, extremist politicians present themselves to an electorate as "moderate" by simply articulating widely held sentiments (whether it be immigrants, national minorities, gender, or the like). In addition to exposing inflammatory comments and actions of parties and candidates, and thereby potentially undermining their broader credibility, it is also the responsibility of

the media to document the consequences of such words and actions. If members of an audience leave a political rally and inflict violence on opponents or supporters, this is vital context that must be reported.

The balancing act of reporting hate speech and actions plays a positive and useful purpose. Not only does it provide an opportunity for content of inflammatory messages to be challenged, but it also gives voice to those who are the targets of the inflammatory messages, thereby nullifying the dehumanising effects of hate speech and actions.

More broadly, accurate reporting of hate speech and actions is a valuable early warning tool, indicating the potential for serious social conflict or human rights violations within a campaign. One of the most important arguments against banning hate speech is that it provides an opportunity for a society to address causes of, and solutions for, prejudice and hatred, rather than avoiding the topic altogether. Responsible media reporting plays a crucial part in this.

- The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network

Code of Conduct for Political Parties

We Pledge Our Commitment to Free and Fair Elections

1. Intimidation in any form is impermissible.
2. No weapon of any kind, including any traditional weapon, may be brought to any political rally, meeting, march or other demonstration.
3. Parties shall avoid holding rallies, meetings, marches or demonstrations physically close to one another during the same time of day.
4. Parties shall refrain from utilising public address systems, either fixed or mobile, between 21:00 and 7:00 hours and which could constitute a public nuisance.
5. Speakers at political rallies may not use language which incites violence in any form against any other person or group of persons. Parties will not issue pamphlets, newsletters or posters which contain materials which incite people to violence.
6. Party members and supporters will not disrupt other parties' rallies, meetings, marches or demonstrations.
7. Party members and supporters will not seek to obstruct other persons from attending the political rallies of other parties.
8. Party members and supporters will not disfigure or destroy political or campaign materials of other parties.
9. Party leaders will use their good offices to ensure reasonable freedom of access by all political parties to potential voters, including those at farms and on state-owned properties, outside working hours.
10. Parties will establish lines of communication to one another at headquarters, regional and local levels, and will appoint liaison personnel who will be constantly on call to deal with any problems that may arise.
11. The Director of Elections will meet party representatives on a weekly basis to discuss all matters of concern related to the election campaign and the election itself. Emergency meetings will be convened as and when necessary.
12. Designated members will attend their parties' rallies to ensure compliance with this code.
13. All allegations of intimidation and other unlawful conduct in the election campaign will be brought to the attention of the Police and of the Directorate of Elections at the places where they are alleged to have occurred.
14. Party leaders will issue directives to their members and supporters to observe this Code of Conduct, and take all other necessary steps to ensure compliance.
15. The Directorate of Elections and party leaders undertake to publicise this Code of Conduct throughout Namibia by all means at their disposal.
16. Parties will in their advertising and propaganda efforts take care not to disfigure the environment.

Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

WHAT IS THE IPPR?

The Institute for Public Policy Research was established in 2001 as a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to deliver, independent, analytical, critical yet constructive research on social, political and economic issues which affect development Namibia. The IPPR was established in the belief that development is best promoted through free and critical debate informed by quality research. The IPPR is independent of government, political parties, business, trade unions and other interest groups and is governed by a board of directors consisting of Monica Koep (chairperson), Bill Lindeke, Graham Hopwood, Ndiitah Nghipondoka-Robiati, Daniel Motinga, Justin Ellis and Michael Humavindu.

Anyone can receive the IPPR's research free of charge by contacting the organisation at 70-72 Frans Indongo Street, Windhoek; PO Box 6566, Windhoek; tel: (061) 240514; fax (061) 240516; email: info@ippr.org.na. All IPPR research is available at <http://www.ippr.org.na>. Material related to Election Watch is available at <http://www.electionwatch.org.na>