



POLITICAL TOLERANCE

“ Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and way 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

Let’s keep it peaceful

Tolerance is the key

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.

If we keep to the principles of tolerance we will have peaceful elections.

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.

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)

THE CODE OF CONDUCT

An essential part of free and fair elections is freedom of political campaigning. Everyone has the right to express his or her political convictions and ideas, without threat or fear of intimidation. Freedom of political campaigning, however, also carries responsibilities which include the freedom of others to express their own and independent opinions. Namibia’s political parties and candidates are supposed to support the Code of Conduct for political parties. Even if they have not signed the Code of Conduct, political parties and candidates are obliged to comply with the Code according to the Electoral Act.

Section 152 of the Electoral Act states:

Contravening the Code of Conduct

If a registered political party or a registered organisation or any office bearer or member thereof contravenes or fails to comply with the Code of Conduct for Political Parties ..., the Commission may cancel the registration of the political party or organisation, after having given the political party, organisation or authorised representative an opportunity to be heard.

You can find the text of the Code of Conduct over the page. Why not display it to show your support for political tolerance?

WE PLEDGE OUR COMMITMENT TO FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

CODE OF CONDUCT

FOR POLITICAL PARTIES

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 (Chief Electoral Officer) 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.

WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT TOLERANCE



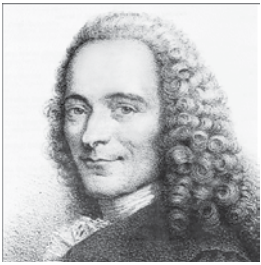
“We have tolerance, respect, and equality in our written laws but not in the hearts of some of our people.”
Ruby Bridges,
 US civil rights activist



“The responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have wider vision.”
George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), British 19th century author



“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



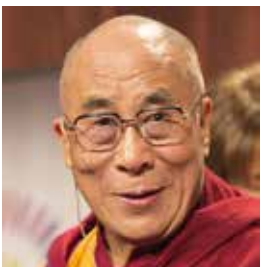
“What is tolerance? It is the consequence of humanity. We are all formed of frailty and error; let us pardon reciprocally each other’s folly. That is the first law of nature.” **Voltaire,** French writer, historian, and philosopher in the 18th century



“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,** late Ghanaian statesman and former UN General Secretary



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



“Compassion and tolerance are not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.”
Tenzin Gyatso,
 the 14th Dalai Lama



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

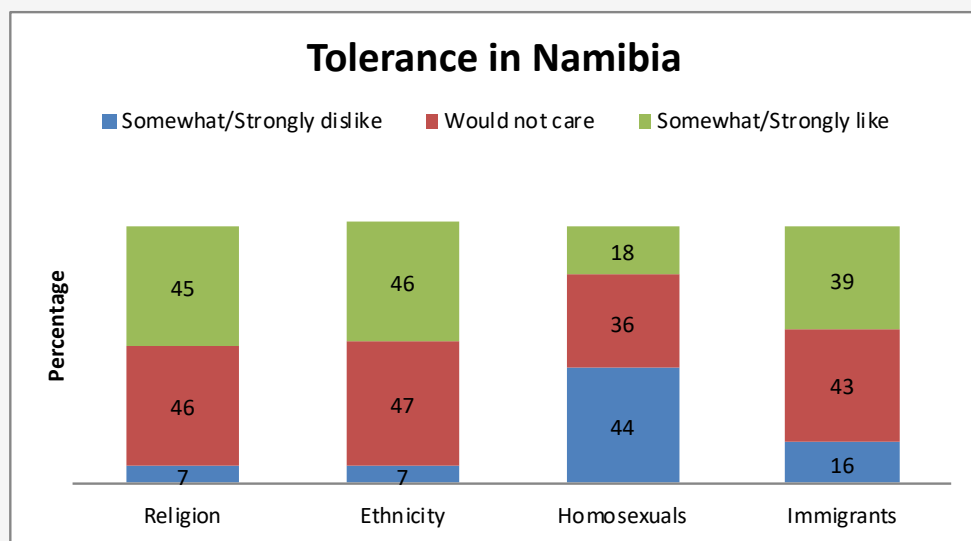


“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others” **Nelson Mandela,** former South African President

How tolerant are Namibians?

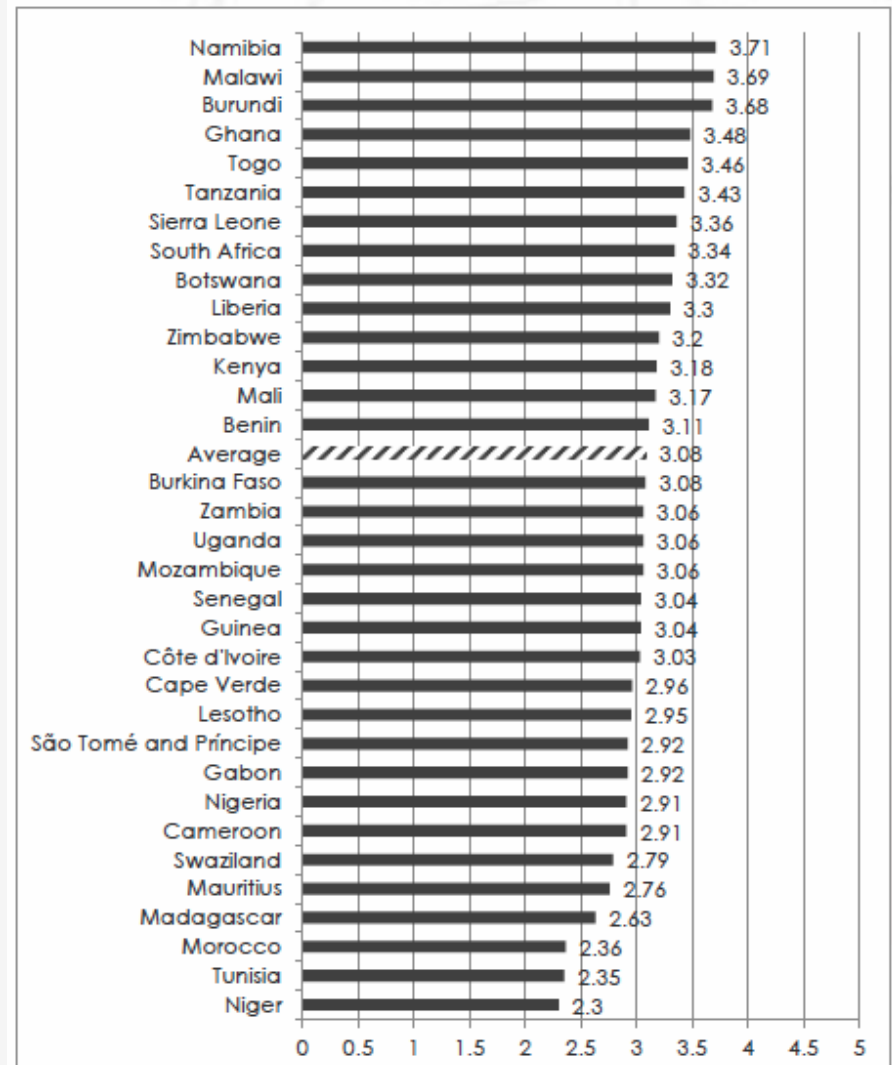
Scholars have argued that a democracy without tolerance for members of other groups is “fatally flawed”.

For the most part Namibians are tolerant of other groups, according to the 2017 Afrobarometer survey of 1 200 people countrywide, although their tolerance for gays/lesbians and immigrants is lower than for people of different ethnicities and religions. Respondents were asked: For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care:



In an earlier round of the survey (2014/15) Namibians were found to be the most tolerant people in Africa (out of 33 countries surveyed). See chart on right:

Index of tolerance in Africa | 33 countries | 2014/2015



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