

2011.09.30 - Press release

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## Universitätsmedizin Berlin honors the victims

### Charité returns twenty human skulls to Namibia

In a solemn ceremony on Friday, September 30<sup>th</sup> Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin officially returned twenty Namibian skulls to the Heritage Council of Namibia. The skulls originated from Herero and Nama people who came from the former German Southwest Africa. They had been killed during their uprising against German colonial rule between 1904 and 1908. Their remains had been stored in different scientific collections in Berlin since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and some of them did not get to Charité until after 1990.

„With this step we face up to an inglorious chapter of German history“, Prof. Karl Max Einhäupl, CEO of Charité explained. He brought back into mind the sufferings the Herero and Nama peoples had to bear during the terrible war led by the German colonial forces. It was the first example of racial colonialism that later became apparent again in National Socialism. “As a medical doctor and scientist myself, it is especially painful for me to realize that even physicians worked in the service of this early form of racism“, Prof. Einhäupl added.

He is convinced that, being a scientific institution, Charité has to meet the challenge to critically analyze the history of the human remains, Prof. Einhäupl continued. The management board of Charité accepts its historic responsibility to the Herero and Nama. “With this return of the human remains Charité wants to express respect and contribute to the honorable remembrance of the victims. We deeply deplore the crimes of those days that were committed in the name of a perverted concept of scientific progress, and it is our sincere desire to apologize.”

Charité is the first institution in Germany to hand back human remains. The skulls that had been stored in Charité mainly belonged to adults between 20 and 40 years of age. Among them were four women, 15 men and one little boy aged three or four. Eleven of them were Nama people; nine belonged to the Herero. It was not possible to determine the cause of death in any of the cases. The results were obtained in a scientific study supported by the German Research Foundation ('DFG'). At the request of the indigenous Namibian communities the researchers had compiled a documentation, which along with the skulls was now handed over to the Namibian side.

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#### weitere Meldungen

