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LEGAL ASSISTANCE CENTRE

Recipient of the UNICEF Maurice Pate Human Rights Award – 1997
JP Karuaihe Human Rights Excellence Award – 2008, 2010, 2014, 2016 and 2020 and Social Responsibility Award – 2013

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PRESS RELEASE

The statement by President Hage Geingob in *The Namibian* of 29 May 2023 warning locals not to interfere in the **green hydrogen project being developed in Tsau//Khaeb National Park** is deeply concerning to the Legal Assistance Centre. As a democracy, we should pride ourselves on upholding the rule of law and protecting the rights of our citizens to the fullest. This statement regrettably suggests that the President is willing to disregard those values in order to push through a controversial project that will have a massive impact on the citizens of this country.

The President's warning sends a chilling and worrying message to those who may have concerns about the environmental impact of the project, or who feel that their voices are not being heard. It suggests that the government is willing to use its power to silence dissent, rather than sincerely engaging with citizens and addressing their valid concerns in a democratic and transparent manner.

We also note that the President's warning comes at a time when there are serious questions about the environmental and economic viability of the green hydrogen project. This makes it all the more important that citizens are allowed to express their views and engage in an open and honest debate about the project. We urgently call on the President to retract his statement and commit to upholding the rule of law and protecting the rights of **all** citizens, regardless of their views on the green hydrogen project. We strongly believe that a truly democratic society requires open and honest debate, especially for a matter of such enormity, and that citizens should be allowed to express their views without fear, favour or retribution.

We note also the regrettable comments made in relation to the Epupa project, by suggesting that the challenges faced by the community, are of their own making. We trust that this was not the intention.

TONI HANCOX
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Issued by the Land, Environment and Development department of the LAC
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