

# Abidjan: Arrest of 4 suspected traffickers with 11 ivory points

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In Abidjan, in the commune of Marcory, four suspected traffickers operating in the illegal ivory trade were arrested on Sunday, October 31, 2021, while they were preparing to sell the goods in a hotel.

## Illegal ivory trade: 4 people including a former deputy, arrested in Abidjan

These men were arrested with 11 ivory tusks in their possession weighing a total of 37.6 kilograms. This arrest is the result of collaboration between the Unit for the Fight against Transnational Organized Crime (UCT), the Ministry of Water and Forests (MINEF) and EAGLE Côte d'Ivoire from which they benefited from technical assistance. However, this operation had some ups and downs due to the unexpected intervention of a gang armed with assault rifles claiming to belong to the Investigation Section of the [Center for the Coordination of Operational Decisions](#) (CCDO).

The four people arrested in the act of possessing and selling ivory points in Marcory, in the district of Abidjan, are specialists in the matter. They were arrested when they intended to sell the said hunting trophies. The ivories seized come mainly from Burkina-Faso, a country neighboring Côte d'Ivoire. A fact that raises the big question of the porosity of land borders. It was at the beginning of the morning of this Sunday that the men of UCT and those of MINEF with the technical support of EAGLE-CI, an NGO specializing in the fight against the trafficking of protected species arrived in the hotel where the traffickers were entrenched with the ivories.

The assault was carried out as the traffickers were preparing to sell the goods. In total, six (06) people were arrested in the Marcory hotel while trying to sell the 11 elephant ivory points. Three (03) of them were arrested in the room with the ivory points in their possession, while their accomplices, three (03) men including a former deputy, were arrested at the restaurant of the hotel and reception.

The arrest operation was quickly disrupted by the arrival of a gang armed with assault rifles and dressed in bulletproof vests. They arrived on the scene and tried to prevent UCT from doing their job. These men had no mission order, uniform or distinctive sign to identify their bodies. They claimed to belong to the Investigation Section of the Center for the Coordination of Operational Decisions (CCDO), a mixed force for the fight against urban crime made up of police, gendarmes, soldiers and civilian personnel. The latter said they were investigating a suspected ivory trafficker he wanted to apprehend.

## "20,000 to 30,000 elephants are killed for their ivories"

The CPU was not impressed, because it put 4 suspects in their vehicle as well as the ivories. The other 2 suspects, who identified themselves as clothed bodies, could not be arrested by UCT. One has been questioned and the 2<sup>e</sup> hearing is expected to follow. The rest of the investigation will shed light on the role of these armed men, their bodies and their identity in order to understand the purpose of their presence. In the meantime, the alleged traffickers were taken to UCT headquarters in Abidjan to be taken into custody and questioned. They were subsequently referred to the Abidjan-Plateau Court of First Instance on November 5, 2021 for illicit trafficking in ivory and then placed under arrest warrant. Regarding the case, it was placed under investigation.

In the next few days, the suspects will be presented to the investigating judge to be heard with a view to possible investigations. If the alleged traffickers are found guilty, they risk a prison sentence ranging from 3 to 12 months with a fine of between 3000 and 300,000 FCFA. It should be remembered that the Ivorian wildlife law is far from dissuasive while the situation

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of protected species is increasingly alarming, in particular that of elephants, killed for their ivory. For the current case, let us know that no less than 6 elephants were killed to have these 11 ivory points. The international ivory trade has been declared illegal since 1989, but African elephant populations continue to decline.

Each year, 20,000 to 30,000 elephants are killed for their ivory, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF); equivalent between 50 to 80 individuals per day. The species has only 415,000 pachyderms in Africa, compared to 3 to 5 million at the start of the last century. In Côte d'Ivoire, more than 1139 have been counted in 26 habitats according to reports made between 1987 and 2000. Today the number of individuals hardly exceeds 300 according to a report by the International Union for Nature Conservation published in 2016.

Two major factors are considered to be the cause of this drastic decline in the number of elephants: on the one hand, the increase in illegal animal trafficking linked to the strong international demand for ivory and on the other hand, the abusive exploitation [of the natural resources necessary for elephants due to industrial agriculture](#) and the anarchic occupation of their habitat. The illegal trade in elephant tusks is unfortunately constantly increasing and weighs 3 billion dollars (nearly 2000 billion CFA francs) per year with South East Asia as the main market, with China and Vietnam as the main market. main buyers.

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