



WAR ON POACHING

Tanzanian among 2 arrested with 81 kilos of elephant tusks in Makueni

The tusks had a street value of more than Sh8 million, officials said
In Summary

- Despite a ban on the international trade in ivory, African elephants are still being poached in large numbers.
- As part of efforts to stop the crime, Kenya has started using high-tech surveillance equipment including drones to track poaching gangs



Some of the elephant tusks that were seized in Wangige, Kiambu County on March 12, 2023

Two men including a Tanzanian national were arrested while transporting 81.7 kilograms of elephant tusks in Mukaa area, Makueni County.

The arrests were made on May 7, 2023, in a joint operation of police and Kenya Wildlife Service who put the value of the tusks at Sh8.1 million.

The men, according to officials, were driving in a salon car when they were intercepted as they tried to sell the cargo to undercover detectives.

A Kenyan driver Samuel Muisyo aged 44 and Tanzanian Bashir Kassim were arrested.

According to police, upon search, the polished worked elephant tusks were recovered.

Police said the men were under interrogation after their initial appearance in court to reveal the source of the tusks.

“The trade in the tusks is illegal and everyone should know this,” said police spokesperson Dr Resla Onyango.

Despite a ban on the international trade in ivory, African elephants are still being poached in large numbers.

As part of efforts to stop the crime, Kenya has started using high-tech surveillance equipment including drones to track poaching gangs and keep tabs on elephants and rhinos.

KWS, working with stakeholders, has put in place mechanisms to eradicate all forms of wildlife crime, particularly poaching.

These mechanisms include enhanced community education, interagency collaboration, and intensive intelligence-led operations among others.

These efforts have led to zero rhino poaching in Kenya in the year 2020; the first time in about two decades.

At least 20,000 elephants are killed annually in Africa for their ivory.

This translates into 55 elephants killed daily or one elephant killed every 26 minutes with a population of 35,000 elephants.

On April 30, 2016, Kenya set ablaze 105 tonnes of elephant ivory and 1.35 tonnes of rhino horn to smouldering ash.

Former president Uhuru Kenyatta led world leaders and conservationists in burning the remains of 6,500 elephants and 450 rhinos killed for their tusks and horns.

Parliament has also passed strict anti-poaching laws and the government has beefed up security at parks to stop poaching, which threatens the vital tourism industry.

Regionally, Kenya has also emerged as a major transit route for ivory destined for Asian markets from eastern and central Africa.

The illegal ivory trade is mostly fueled by demand in Asia and the Middle East, where elephant tusks and rhinoceros horns are used to make ornaments and traditional medicines.