

Kenya: Suspected Trafficker Found with 185 Pounds of Elephant Tusk



In 2016, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta symbolically burnt 105 tonnes of ivory tusk in protest of the ivory trade in the country. Photographer: Carl De Souza/AFP/Getty Images

A joint ambush conducted by Kenya's Wildlife Service and members of the DCI Serious Crime Unit has resulted in the arrest of 57-year-old Sila Waweu in Kiambu county. Waweu, who was accompanied by three others, was caught in Kenya's southern Kibwezi area with a bag containing 185 pounds of elephant tusks worth an estimated \$65,000, while his accomplices managed to evade arrest.

What You Need to Know

Following his arrest, Waweu was charged with two counts of dealing in endangered wildlife species—of which he pleaded guilty—and a series of additional charges which are yet to be released.

According to the nation's Wildlife and Conservation Management Act, any person who commits an offense against an endangered or threatened species may face a fine of not less than 20 million Shillings (\$155,694), life imprisonment, or both.

Conversely, any person found in possession of a wildlife trophy or dealing in a wildlife trophy is liable to a fine of at least 1 million shillings (\$7,751), a prison term of at least five years, or both.

Despite the threat of such charges, poaching and wildlife trafficking continue to be a major threat to Kenya's ecosystem.

On the 18th of July, a pair was arrested with six pieces of elephant tusks in Kenya's Tigania East, weighing 40 pounds and worth an approximate 1.9 million Shillings (\$14,728).

Officials believed the tusks had been poached from at least three elephants, illustrating the size of the issue Kenya is facing.

Despite implementing [unconventional](#) anti-poaching methods such as utilizing former poachers in anti-poaching operations, the demand of ivory in Asia and the Middle East keeps the trade alive.

In 2022, the global ivory trade was already generating an approximate \$23 billion annually, despite a 1989 United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) ban on the international sale of the sought after animal bone.

So, What Now?

In 2016, Kenya's former President Uhuru Kenyatta symbolically burnt 105 tonnes of elephant ivory as well as one ton of rhino horn in an act against poaching in the country. Since then, the Kenyan government alongside the Kenyan Wildlife Service have implemented sweeping reforms to combat poaching in the country, and yet the trade continues due to the continual international demand for ivory products.