



Officials colluding with poachers

28 December 2016 | Opinion

It will be an exaggeration to say that Namibia has turned the tide against wildlife poaching.

The situation on the ground clearly suggests that there is no end in sight, and that the country is experiencing a catastrophic rhino and elephant poaching crisis.

These illegal killings appear to be part of an international criminal syndicate, with rustlers quick to recruit willing poachers, with the ultimate aim of exporting our precious ivory and rhino horn to Eastern Asian markets.

At this rate it seems that the poachers are winning this battle as global efforts against rhino horn traffickers still fall short. Wildlife trafficking is estimated to generate billions of dollars a year globally. Although the authorities have come up with a number of interventions, such as increasing patrols in areas deemed as hotspots for poaching, there appears to be a disturbing trend that involves officials colluding with poachers.

Bribery and corruption, combined with soft penalties for poachers, have created a perfect situation for organised crime to move in and one can tell from a number of incidents reported in the media.

A number of African countries like Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia just to mention have overwhelming evidence suggesting that sometimes rangers were colluding with poachers and that governments are complicit in the wholesale slaughter of the continent's wildlife heritage. Namibia is not an exception as officials are being bribed by criminal poaching syndicates to turn a blind eye to these illegal killings.

So there is little hope of success given the organised crime syndicate behind rhino horn trafficking.

If we cannot find an end to this systematic corruption, then we should forget about winning the battle against poaching.