



Stop poaching now!

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About 40 environmental organisations have issued a stern warning to Chinese nationals involved in criminal activities in the country.

Local environmental organisations have expressed outrage at the continuing wildlife crimes that are allegedly being committed by Chinese nationals in the country. A strong-worded open letter - supported by 40 environmental organisations - was on Wednesday delivered to the Chinese embassy.

The letter is written by CEO of the Namibian Chamber of Environment Chris Brown who claims the Chinese have caused an initial estimated N\$800 million loss to Namibia's wildlife and ecosystems.

The letter follows only a week after the Chinese business community and the Namibian police held a meeting in Windhoek in which they discussed the fact that an increasing number of Chinese nationals are involved in poaching activities in the country.

Brown said Namibians are frustrated by the apparent lack of action by the Chinese embassy in Namibia, and the Chinese state, to stop the unlawful actions of their nationals involved in criminal activities.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/assets/poaching-now2016-12-230.jpg>)

ANOTHER TWO: Chinese nationals Zhang Ruhe, 60, and Xinxi Xi, 47, who were recently arrested while in possession of elephant tusks. Photo: NAMPA

"Quiet behind-the-scenes diplomacy has failed to have any discernible impact," he said.

Brown pointed out that during the past few weeks several Chinese nationals have been arrested and charged with wildlife crimes including illegal possession of rhino horn, ivory and pangolin skins and scales.

He said too many Chinese nationals have abused Namibia's environmental laws, and this is causing growing resentment and anger amongst locals.

"By their criminal actions, some Chinese nationals have drawn attention to themselves and their nationality through their blatant disregard of Namibia's legal and environmental values," he said.

"We are concerned by an apparent total disregard by some Chinese nationals for Namibia's wildlife, conservation, and animal welfare laws and values."

He said that Namibia as a nation has worked hard to protect and nurture its natural assets. He added the country's wildlife management provides an international example for good conservation and sustainable use and that the country has not made these investments so that some Chinese nationals, or anyone else, can pillage them.

He said that although they recognise that not all Chinese nationals are involved in wildlife crimes, Namibia's environmental community believes that the situation regarding Chinese nationals committing wildlife crimes in the country is far more serious and broad-based than have been acknowledged by the Chinese embassy. He said as Chinese nationals moved into all regions of Namibia, setting up businesses, networks, acquiring mineral prospecting licenses and offering payment for wildlife products, the incidence of poaching, illegal wildlife capture, collection, killing and export has increased exponentially.

He claims Chinese nationals have been involved in or are the commercial drivers behind the escalating poaching of rhinos and elephants in Namibia and the illegal export of rhino horn and ivory, the capture, trade and export of pangolins, and the import of Chinese monofilament nets in industrial quantities via Zambia to the northeast of Namibia, which are destroying the fisheries of the Zambezi, Chobe, Kwando and Okavango rivers.

According to him, they are also aware of long-standing interests by some Chinese in illegal commercial interests. Brown said that the recent announcement by the Chinese business community that it is contributing N\$30 000 to counter rhino poaching, while acknowledging that Namibians are deeply concerned about the situation caused by some Chinese nationals, totally fails to understand the economic scale of the problem. This is an insult to the environmental sector in Namibia and the environment, he said.

According to him, an initial, very conservative, estimate of the extent of the losses to Namibia's wildlife and ecosystems caused by Chinese nationals is about N\$811 million. On Wednesday when the letter was sent, around 100 Chinese business people marched in Rundu against poaching and appealed to both governments to deal with the culprits involved in wildlife crimes.

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