



## Three missing in Etosha

### Disappearances linked to poaching

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CATHERINE SASMAN

At least three Zimba and Himba men have reportedly disappeared in the Etosha National Park under mysterious circumstances and are feared dead, reports NamRights.

Kakururua Tjonda (41), Uasindikirua 'Muzeu' Tjिताura (43) and Kambinde Mbuanda (38) disappeared in the park on or around 29 October.

Sources told NamRights that the missing men were part of a group of at least seven poachers who had been involved in a shootout with members of the anti-poaching unit of the Namibian police in the western part of the game reserve.

According to the sources at least four of the alleged poachers were shot dead and the three missing men ran into the bush.

It is now believed that the three have died from thirst or were killed by wild animals, or both.

"Relatives of the three men said they received a call from the men who sounded very weak and said they were dying from thirst. The call then went dead," said NamRights' executive director, Phil ya Nangoloh.

He said the relatives believed the missing men were recruited at Opuwo by rhino horn and elephant tusk traffickers to poach in Etosha on their behalf.

Relatives of the missing men told NamRights that the matter was reported to the police at Opuwo and there was an unsuccessful police search by air.

The relatives, however, alleged that the Kunene regional commander, Brigadier James Nderura, and a certain Iyambo of the police at Opuwo were reluctant to assist in tracing the missing men.

The relatives claimed that Nderura "and his men had something to hide".

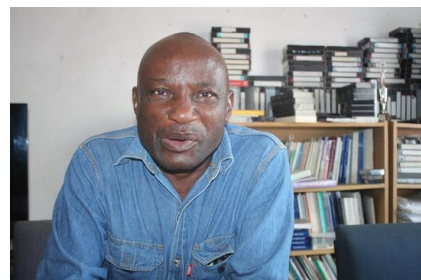
They have also approached the office of Kunene governor Angelica Muharukua and OvaHerero paramount chief Vekuii Rukoro for assistance.

Ya Nangoloh yesterday concurred with the relatives that the police were "hiding something" this matter.

"They are either trying to cover up for the traffickers or the fact that some people had died in the shootout," said Ya Nangoloh.

He said it was a strange coincidence that this matter was now emerging after Chinese national Ye Zhiwei was caught with 18 rhino horns at Oliver Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg in late November after having slipped through Hosea Kutako International Airport although the rhino horns clearly showed on the scanners.

Ya Nangoloh further claimed that Sergeant Pendapala Abraham litula, who was manning the scanner at the time when Zhiwei walked through with the rhino horns, had been transferred from Outjo to operate the scanning machine.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/asse/missing-in-etosha2016-12-080.jpg>)  
SUSPICIOUS: The executive director of NamRights, Phil ya Nangoloh. Photo: Catherine Sasman

"If this is true the question is who transferred litula to be at the Hosea International Airport just in time," Ya Nangoloh surmised.

He said he had phoned Lieutenant-General Sebastian Ndeitunga on Tuesday about the matter and had made an appeal to the police chief that this matter be urgently and thoroughly be investigated.

He said that Ndeitunga claimed that he was unaware of the case.

Nderura's cellphone remained unanswered yesterday and Ndeitunga also did not answer his phone.