



## Poaching on the decrease

24 October 2017 | Crime

This year a total of 27 rhinos and 20 elephants have been poached, indicating a significant decline in poaching when compared to previous years.

Releasing the latest statistics of recorded poaching incidents of rhino and elephants for this year, the environment and tourism minister, Pohamba Shifeta, said rhino poaching had gone down by about 50% from 2016.

In 2016, a total of 60 rhino were poached while 95 rhino were poached in 2015 and 56 rhino in 2014.

With regard to elephants there has been a decrease of more than 80% compared with 2016.

In 2016, a total of 101 elephants were poached, while 49 elephants were poached in 2015 and 78 elephants were poached in 2014.

Also 30 rhino horns have been confiscated this year, while 103 elephant tusk and 69 pieces of elephant tusk were confiscated.

Furthermore, with regard to arrests made, 75 people have been arrested this year compared to 82 last year and 96 in 2015. These arrests were all for wildlife crimes, illegal hunting and possession of either rhino horns or elephant tusks.

The majority of those arrested this year, 56, were Namibians. Eight were Angolans, five were Chinese, two were Zambians, two were from Botswana and two were Congolese.

The latest incident was the arrest of two suspects in Etosha National Park last week.

Shifeta said the two suspects were attacked and injured by a rhino.

"These two suspects attempted to poach rhinos and they were pursuing a cow with a calf in Etosha and through our intelligence their activities were known to the authorities," said Shifeta.

One suspect was arrested on 16 October with minor injuries while the other was arrested on 20 October with serious injuries and later died.

"The rhino have now decided to fight back and take on the poachers themselves," the minister said.

According to Shifeta the strategies that the ministry has implemented against poaching are working and therefore there is a decrease in poaching.

"We want to eradicate poaching completely. Hopefully by next year things will change with a dedicated anti-poaching unit."

He added that the recruitment of the anti-poaching unit has been slow because of budget cuts.

"This is being discussed with the relevant offices and we hope it will be resolved soon."

Shifeta said the successes recorded demonstrate that the investments against poaching have been worthwhile.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/assets/on-the-decrease2017-10-240.jpg>)

ON THE DECREASE: Elephant poaching has declined by more than 80% since last year.

Photo: FILE

“This is contrary to critics that the government is not doing enough and is ill prepared to deal with the poaching problem.”

He added that despite the financial constraints the ministry has managed to bring these results and this is thanks to the security forces and those working on the ground.

“Compared to other countries faced with poaching, our situation is much better due to the cooperation between stakeholders.”

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