



'Only God can judge him'

Preacher Babi stands accused of illegally being in possession of two rhino horns, a firearm and ammunition.

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IN COURT: Pastor Jackson Babi and Friza Dumeni. PHOTO: Contributed

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WINDHOEK

Self-professed prophet of House of Joy Ministries, Pastor Jackson Babi (30), and his co-accused Friza Dumeni spent the weekend behind bars.

Accused of illegally being in possession of two rhino horns, a firearm and ammunition – found in the pastor's Kleine Kuppe home last week – the duo's bail application, which was set to take place in the Windhoek Magistrate's Court on Friday, was postponed to today.

Despite a backlog of cases due to the coronavirus pandemic, Babi and Dumeni's legal representative Kadhila Amoomo tried everything in his power to get Magistrate Jo-Rina Jagger to schedule the suspects' bail application as soon as possible.

Prosecutor Rowan van Wyk said he would strongly oppose bail.

Flock of sheep

Outside, the pastor's followers, who were not allowed inside the courtroom due to coronavirus regulations, watched their beloved prophet's first court appearance through a window.

Some women cried.

"Even if he's found guilty in court, only God can judge him," a female congregation member told Namibian Sun's sister publication, Republikein. Babi was dressed neatly in a grey suit, black shirt and expensive black shoes, but hid from the media's cameras behind his mask.

Next to him, Dumeni looked untidy in black sweatpants, a maroon sweatshirt and sandals with socks.

Undercover operation

The two were arrested last Wednesday and are part of eight suspects related to the case.

Two of the eight suspects are allegedly a VIP police officer and a former member of the Namibian Defence Force. The case stems from two rhino carcasses which were found on a farm in the Gobabis area in the Omaheke Region last Tuesday.

The same day, four suspects were arrested at Otjiwarongo after allegedly trying to sell two rhino horns to an undercover police officer.

These four accused, who may not be named, appeared in camera in regional court at the town last Thursday.

Daniel in the lion's den

The case is in an early and sensitive stage and further arrests could follow, ministry of environment spokesperson Romeo Muyunda said.

Two other suspects were meant to appear in the Gobabis Magistrate's Court on Friday, but according to the head of the Blue Rhino task team, commissioner Barry de Klerk, they did not.

On House of Joy Ministries' Facebook page, Babi is described as Daniel in the lion's den.

“Keep praying for our father and the church during these trying times. Refrain from listening to unconfirmed sources,”
a post read.

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