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Preacher questions rhino poaching arrest

News - National | 2020-06-08

by [Werner Menges](#)

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Jackson Babi

RELIGIOUS preacher Jackson Babi, who is facing criminal charges after rhino horns were allegedly discovered in his house in Windhoek, is claiming the police's search of his home and also his second arrest last week were unlawful.

Babi's defence lawyer, Kadhila Amoomo, on Friday filed an urgent application in the Windhoek High Court in a bid to have his client's arrest last week, while he was already in police custody following an arrest the previous week, declared unlawful.

Babi is also asking the High Court to declare the search of his house in Windhoek's Kleine Kuppe area nearly two weeks ago as invalid and unlawful, and to review and set aside the arrest warrant on which he was arrested on Tuesday last week.

Babi (30), who is a self-described prophet and founder of the House of Joy Ministries evangelical religious group in Windhoek, and co-accused Frizans Naululu Dumeni (25) are facing charges of dealing in or possessing two rhino horns and possessing a hunting rifle and ammunition

without a licence in a case in the Windhoek Magistrate's Court.

On Tuesday last week, a magistrate at Gobabis also issued a warrant for Babi's arrest on a charge of hunting specially protected game, and he was thereafter arrested on that charge as well. During an appearance in the Windhoek Magistrate's Court on Wednesday, Babi's second case was transferred to the Gobabis Magistrate's Court, where he is due to make an appearance before a magistrate today.

The charges in both cases follow the poaching of two rhinos found killed on a farm in the Gobabis area on 26 May. It is alleged that two horns removed from the rhinos after they had been poached were offered for sale to an undercover police officer at Otjiwarongo on 26 May.

Subsequent investigations allegedly led the police to Babi's house, where another two rhino horns and a hunting rifle and ammunition are claimed to have been found.

The horns allegedly discovered at Babi's house are suspected to be linked to the poaching of the rhinos at the Gobabis area farm.

A scheduled bail application by Babi and Dumeni last week did not proceed after Babi's second arrest on the warrant issued by the Gobabis magistrate.

The search of his house took place without a search warrant and was not done in his presence, Babi says in an affidavit filed at the High Court.

He also says he told the police officers, who claimed to have found rhino horns in his house, he did not know anything about the items, but they insisted the horns belonged to him and questioned him about it.

"I deny that I was in possession of those rhino horns and I deny that I was dealing in rhino horns at all or any other wildlife resource or product," Babi states.

He also says he cannot understand why it was necessary to arrest him, as he would have gone to court as required if summoned to do so.

The arrest warrant issued by the magistrate at Gobabis is defective and should be set aside, because it is not clear, does not set out what exactly he is alleged to have done in committing an offence, and the magistrate granted it without applying his mind to all the facts, Babi claims.

He also claims his arrest based on the warrant was defective, as he was not provided with a copy of an affidavit used to obtain the arrest warrant.

Babi has given notice that he wants his urgent application to be heard in the Windhoek High Court today.

