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Preacher denies bribery charge

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Jackson Babi

AN evangelical preacher who has been in jail since May after being arrested over the possession of rhino horns and the poaching of a rhino in the Gobabis district on Friday denied guilt on a charge of bribery in the Windhoek Magistrate's Court.

Jackson Babi (30) and a co-accused, Ananias Ananias, both pleaded not guilty to a charge of bribery and a count of conspiring to commit bribery during a court appearance before magistrate Linus Samunzala.

Defence lawyer Kadhila Amoomo told the court they chose to remain silent and would not provide a plea explanation at this stage.

Babi and Ananias are accused of having offered a police officer a bribe of N\$13 000 on 26 June in an attempt to have Babi released on bail.

Babi, who uses the title 'prophet' and is the founder of the House of Joy Ministries evangelical religious group in Windhoek, has been in custody since 27 May, when

he was arrested after two rhino horns, a hunting rifle and ammunition were allegedly found at his home in the city's Kleine Kuppe area.

He and another co-accused, Frizans Naululu Dumeni, have been charged with being in possession of or dealing in two rhino horns, being in possession of a hunting rifle and ammunition without a licence, and hunting specially protected game. In a separate case in the Gobabis Magistrate's Court, Babi has also been charged in connection with the poaching of two rhinos at a farm in the Gobabis district in May.

Babi applied to be granted bail in August, but Samunzala turned his application down in September.

Amoomo has filed an appeal to the High Court against the magistrate's bail ruling.

The case in which Babi and Ananias have been charged has been postponed to 20 January for the prosecutor general to make a decision on the further course of the matter.

Ananias is also being kept in custody.