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## Less poaching, more arrests in 2020

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by [Arlana Shikongo](#)



Namibia in 2020 had fewer incidents of wildlife poaching and maintained a high number of arrests for wildlife crime according to the environment ministry. Photo: File

**THE Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism recorded fewer incidents of wildlife poaching and maintained a high number of arrests for wildlife crime in 2020, minister Pohamba Shifeta says.**

Shifeta announced figures for 2020 at the launch of the revised national strategy on wildlife protection and law enforcement in Windhoek yesterday.

He said more resources have been allocated to fighting poaching, which includes more government agencies and non-governmental organisations, the private sector, international development partners and communities.

In 2020, Namibia recorded a total of 31 rhinos poached compared to 52 in 2019, 81 in 2018, 55 in 2017, 66 in 2016 and 97 in 2015, the minister announced.

A total of 11 elephants were poached in 2020, compared to 13 in 2019, 27 in 2018, 50 in 2017, 101 in 2016 and 49 in 2015.

As for pangolin, eight live animals were seized in 2020, as well as five full carcasses, 59 skins, five skin pieces and 924 scales, he said.

Namibia has in recent years strengthened its anti-poaching efforts by taking a multisectoral approach to wildlife crime, which includes the involvement of the Namibian Defence Force, the Namibian Police, the Blue Rhino task team and the Anti-Poaching Unit.

Furthermore, the Anti-Poaching Unit also has subunits such as its own intelligence services and dog unit.

#### ARRESTS FOR WILDLIFE CRIMES

Shifeta said 654 suspects were arrested in 2020, with 308 wildlife crime cases registered that year.

Of those, 111 cases are related to high-value species.

"Of these cases, 100 are related to pangolin poaching and trafficking, 64 to elephant poaching and trafficking, while 113 are related to rhino poaching and trafficking," he said.

The majority of the suspects, a total of 597, were Namibian, however, other Southern African Development Community nationals were also among those arrested.

Some 26 Zambians, 22 Angolans, one Botswana national and one Zimbabwean were also arrested.

Regarding prosecution, 1 595 court hearings on wildlife crime cases were recorded in 2020.

Of these, 104 were finalised in courts, with 162 suspects found guilty of wildlife-related charges.

The minister said 16 suspects were acquitted of their charges.

"You can clearly see from the statistics that we have been hard at work to curb wildlife crime in the country and much success has been achieved," Shifeta said.

He said that many of last year's arrests included kingpins, middlemen and various aiders and abettors, rather than poachers only.

"A number of high-level perpetrators of wildlife crimes were arrested in Namibia during 2020, particularly related to rhino poaching and trafficking," he said.

The minister said Namibia is making efforts towards catching the heads of the poaching syndicates in and around the country, rather than going after the poachers.

There are plans in the works to facilitate an amnesty programme for those involved in wildlife crimes who can assist in getting to the top of these syndicates.

"I have instructed our technical team in the ministry to work out a form of amnesty for those involved in wildlife crimes, but are not yet arrested, to voluntarily come out and hand themselves over to the authorities for possible protection from prosecution . . .," he said.

A recently published study by an organisation called TRAFFIC – the wildlife trade monitoring network – detailed that most offenders incarcerated for wildlife crimes in Namibia are low-level poachers or traders rather than kingpins in organised, illegal wildlife trade (IWT).