

Write a letter to the editor

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## Wildlife protection strategy until 2026

Shifeta: "It is our duty to protect all game"

Environment Minister Pohamba Shifeta presents figures and statistics that show a clear reduction in the number of poaching incidents, but on the other hand show a steady increase in arrests. He is satisfied with the controls introduced, but complains about the constant criticism of the MEFT program, which tries to bring the pachyderms under control.

WILDEREI-STATISTIK		
	 Nashörner	 Elefanten
2020	31	11
2019	52	13
2018	81	27
2017	55	50
2016	66	101
2015	97	49



State Secretary of the Environment Ministry, Teofilus Nghitila, Major General Annemarie Nainda of the Namibian Police (NamPol), Environment Minister Pohamba Shifeta and Environment Commissioner Colgar Sikopo (from left to right) at the launch of the five-year strategy for wildlife protection yesterday. Photo: Frank Steffen

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By Frank Steffen, Windhoek

The Minister for the Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), Pohamba Shifeta, presented a brief review of the period from 2015 to 2020 yesterday, when his ministry had implemented an initial wildlife protection strategy: "There were more and more resources allocated to combat poaching. Other government agencies as well as non-governmental organizations, the private sector, international development partners, and the local population and the general public have supported our efforts in the fight against poaching. "

Shifeta urged the public to continue to fight poaching together with the MEFT. But he also invited poachers to surrender: "If you are honest and approach us with good will or afterwards stand by us in our fight by giving clues and not attracting attention again, we are even ready to help you with the prosecution At the moment, one would mainly list protected game, but all game, including birds, should be protected. The aim is to perfect the controls in the next few years.

He read some statistics and proudly pointed out that 97 rhinos had been illegally shot in 2015, down from 31 last year; In the case of elephants, 49 were poached in 2015 (2017 even 101) and in 2020 there were 11 pachyderms. Namibia owes such successes to the Namibian Armed Forces (NDF), the Namibian Police (NamPol) and their NCIS security department, as well as the law enforcement authorities and the specialized secret department "Blue Rhino", which merges with the various anti-poaching units.

## Mainly Namibians

Last year, a total of 654 suspects were arrested in connection with 308 wildlife crime cases, 91% of whom were Namibians. In the special issue that publishes the new and revised National Strategy for Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement, the MEFT has published an incredible number of figures and statistics for the period January 2015 to December 2020. A total of 2,950 suspects had been arrested in connection with 1,326 cases - 504 pangolin (pangolin) cases, 499 rhino-poaching cases and 383 elephants. Of the 1326 court cases, however, only just under 28 percent were dealt with by the Namibian courts - 371 cases over five years or 74 cases per year.

334 of the rhino-, elephant- and pangolin-related 579 cases (ie 58%) were recorded in six of the regions that can be found above the veterinary fence in the north of the country: Eastern Kavango (115), Zambezi (80 ), Kunene (51), Omusati (47), Oshana (25) and West Kavango (16). Namibian nationals, Angolans and Zambians occupy the first three places of the 1,352 court cases and the 204 convicted persons. Namibians are by far the highest number and Asians make up fourth place in each of the 14 court cases and 9 of the convicts.

The minister was annoyed by critics who would fundamentally criticize every step the government took when it came to the reduction of animals: "I am inviting you to visit the local farmers in the north. But then I would like to oblige you to stay up there for a while so that you can finally understand the dangers these people are sometimes exposed to when elephants migrate to their villages or systematically destroy their fields and crops. We are regularly accused of only talking but not doing anything! "Under such circumstances, people's anger would often turn into downright hatred.

Two people were eaten by crocodiles and 14 people were injured, namely by buffalo (6), leopard (3), lions (2) and one person each by monkeys, elephants and hippos. "Last year, 3450 hectares of farmland were destroyed by wildlife, of which 3346 hectares were destroyed by elephants. It's mostly the cops who keep coming, "Shifeta explained. A total of 813 head of cattle fell victim to the human-animal conflict in 2020. The MEFT had to pay N \$ 5 million in damages.