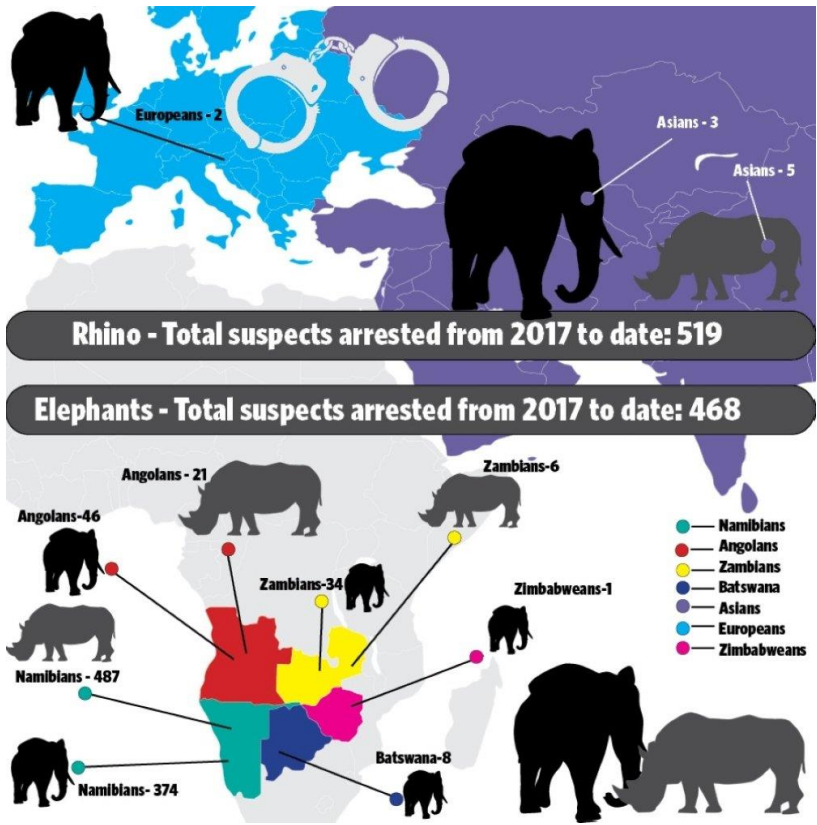




- [HOME](#)
- [CRIME](#)
- ONLY 142 CONVICTED FOR POACHING SINCE 2017



- [CRIME](#)

ONLY 142 CONVICTED FOR POACHING SINCE 2017

Ellanie Smit

- 2022-06-17 01:00:00

More than 40% of the 987 suspects arrested in connection with elephant and rhino wildlife crimes over the past five years are currently free on bail.

Statistics show that 415 of the close to 1 000 persons arrested on elephant and rhino crime charges were released on bail, while only 142 of those detained since 2017 have been convicted of their crimes to date.

Meanwhile, more than 87% of the 987 arrested suspects are Namibians.

This is according to statistics shared by deputy commissioner Barry de Klerk, head of the protected resources division and the Blue Rhino Task Team.

The senior official provided an overview of wildlife crimes in Namibia at a national stakeholders' forum on wildlife crime and law enforcement.

Among the statistics released was the seizure of 291 firearms since 2017, of which 18 were confiscated this year.

A total of 152 vehicles were also impounded during this period - 17 this year.

And, in addition to the 11 black rhino carcasses discovered in Etosha National Park recently, rhino poaching figures for 2022 now stand at 21.

Stark problem

"Poaching is still alive and the challenge is still here, we may see the numbers even increase within the next few days," the police officer said.

A total of 131 wildlife crimes relating to rhinos were registered from 2017 to date.

Of these, 93 cases are ongoing at court, 16 ended in convictions, nine have been provisionally withdrawn, eight were struck from court rolls, two were finalised without a conviction, two were not solved and one case is indeterminate.

The majority of registered rhino cases were registered in the Kunene Region (26), followed by:

Otjozondjupa (25) Omusati (16), Oshikoto (16) and Erongo (12).

More convictions

Since 2017, police arrested 519 suspects on rhino poaching charges, of which 487 were Namibians, 21 Angolans, six Zambians and five Asians.

Of these, 243 are current free on bail, while 132 are awaiting trial. Thirty-two cases were withdrawn, 30 of the accused were convicted, 30 were discharged and 29 were released; nine suspects died, eight absconded and five were acquitted.

De Klerk stressed that more cases should result in convictions. He pointed out that in 2020, 145 persons were detained in relation to suspected rhino wildlife crimes, but only eight convictions came from those cases.

Of the 80 arrests in 2021, only two ended in convictions.

In 2014, 56 rhinos were poached, a time when the country saw a stark spike in cases, followed by 97 in 2015, 66 in 2016, 55 in 2017 and 83 in 2018.

Poaching numbers began to decline, with 56 rhinos killed in 2019, 40 in 2020 and 43 last year.

Elephants

Since 2017, a total of 232 wildlife cases involving elephants have been registered, of which 21 were opened this year.

A total of 468 suspects were arrested during this period for elephant wildlife crimes, of which 374 were Namibians, 46 Angolans, 34 Zambians, eight Motswana, three Asians, two Europeans and one Zimbabwean.

The majority of these suspects (172) are out on bail, while 128 are awaiting trial; 112 persons have been convicted, 21 cases were withdrawn, nine suspects have absconded and eight suspects have been acquitted. Also, eight suspects have been discharged, six were released on a warning, three more have been released and one died.

Only two elephants were killed by poachers this year to date.

This is a massive drop from the 78 elephants killed in 2014, followed by 49 in 2015, 101 in 2016 and 50 in 2017. Elephant poaching in Namibia declined in 2018 with 27 elephants poached, 13 in 2019, 12 in 2020 and eight last year.