

‘Prophet’ jailed for rhino poaching

2022-09-12 **Maria Amakali**



Self-proclaimed prophet and founder of the House of Joy Ministries Jackson Babi was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on Friday for rhino poaching.

On Friday, Gobabis magistrate Eden Iyambo sentenced Babi when he found him guilty on 19 charges related to illegally hunting protected animals.

On two counts of hunting of specially protected game, which had an alternative count of conspiracy to hunt, the court sentenced the “prophet” to three years of direct imprisonment for each count.

However, on top of the sentence, the court ordered Babi to pay a fine of N\$100 000 for each count.

On the two charges of theft, Babi was sentenced to serve two years imprisonment, respectively.

On the charge of possession of controlled wildlife products, he is to serve three years imprisonment or pay a N\$50 000 fine.

The court also sentenced him to pay a fine of N\$5000 or serve a year in prison on each of the two counts of illegal possession of ammunition and firearm.

On the three counts relating to racketeering, he was ordered to pay a fine of N\$30 000 or serve two years in prison on each of the counts.

While the two charges relate to money laundering, he is to pay a N\$30 000 fine or serve two years imprisonment on each count.

On the charge of attempting to commit corruption, he is to serve two years imprisonment or pay a fine of N\$20 000.

Magistrate Iyambo also declared Babi unfit to possess a firearm for a period of four years.

Babi was arrested in May 2020 and formed part of the group that was found to be in possession of rhino horns at his residence in Kleine Kuppe in Windhoek on 26 and 27 May 2020.

According to police reports at the time, the group of eight men includes a police officer from the VIP protection directorate.

The alleged discovery of the horns, firearm and bullets also led to his arrest and that of his co-accused, Dumeni, and two other suspects Alberto Mbwale and Joseph Matheus.

The rhino horns are linked to the poaching of two rhinos found dead and with their horns removed in the area of Gobabis in May 2020.

While in custody, Babi tried to bribe the investigating officer by offering him N\$13 000 to facilitate his release on bail.

Following his conviction and subsequent sentence, ministry of environment spokesperson Romeo Muyunda said the court's ruling is welcomed.

"This judgment is pleasing to the ministry, as we view it to be commensurate with the nature of offences committed. It is our hope that it will also serve as a deterrent to those with the intention to commit similar crimes," said Muyunda.

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