

63 rhinos poached so far this year

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by Eino Vatileni



THE MINISTRY of Environment, Forestry and Tourism says 63 rhinos have been poached since January this year.

This was revealed by ministry spokesperson Romeo Muyunda on Saturday.

According to Muyunda, out of the 63 poached rhinos, 41 were black rhinos and 22 white rhinos.

"This year's poaching cases include 15 rhinos poached on custodianship farms, another 22 on private farms, and 26 in Etosha National Park," he said.

He said Namibia recorded 44 rhinos poached in 2021, 42 in 2020, 57 in 2019, and five in 2017.

"Even though we continue to record successes in our fight against wildlife crimes, poaching of high-valued species remains a concern," he said.

Muyunda said after a surge of poaching in 2014, numerous interventions have been put in place across the country under the leadership of the ministry to fight wildlife crime.

He said during the festive season, the ministry and its partners in wildlife protection and law enforcement will step up efforts against wildlife crime in the country.

"In the past, we have observed that poachers take advantage of the festive season to undertake criminal activities such as poaching rhino, pangolins, elephants and other species," Muyunda said.

He said fighting rhino poaching requires the involvement of all stakeholders – especially members of the public – in reporting suspected perpetrators.

"The perpetrators of these crimes are within society. Therefore, we should report suspicious activities to the authorities," Muyunda said.

The spokesperson called on the public to unite against the illegal plundering of resources by rejecting wildlife crimes in the country.

FEWER ELEPHANTS POACHED

Elephant poaching figures continue to decline, with four poached this year.

"In 2021, Namibia recorded 10 elephants poached, 12 in 2020, 13 in 2019, 27 in 2018, and 50 in 2017," Muyunda said.

He said the ministry appreciates the work of the anti-poaching units across the country, which involve the police, the Namibian Defence Force, and conservancies.

"We salute the work of the prosecutor general's office, the Blue Rhino Task Force, non-governmental organisations, farmers, the private sector, development partners and members of the public for their cooperation and collaboration in this fight," Muyunda said.

ARRESTS

So far, 106 suspects have been arrested this year, of which 44 were arrested for crimes related to poaching, while 62 were arrested for elephant poaching.

Namibians top the list of poaching suspects arrested by the police, Muyunda said.

"The highest number of 93 suspects are Namibian citizens, who, in our view, should be at the forefront of the fight against poaching," he said.

According to him, other suspects include eight Angolan nationals and five Zambians.

"We are happy to note that at least nine people were convicted. Seven were convicted for elephant poaching-related cases, while two are for rhino poaching," he said.

ZERO TOLERANCE

The ministry has warned that anti-poaching teams will not relent this festive season.

"More personnel and officers will be dedicated to conduct patrols and law enforcement. Those intending to take chances must be warned that this festive season it will be business as unusual," Muyunda warned.

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