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Namibia rhino poaching surges to record level, blame on cross-border syndicates

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The number of endangered rhinos poached in Namibia reached the highest level on record in 2022, as twice as many animals — 87 compared to 45 — were killed in 2021, official government data showed on Monday (30 January).

Africa's rhino population has been decimated over the decades to feed demand for rhino horn, which, despite being made of the same stuff as rhino hair and fingernails, is prized in East Asia as jewelry and fake medicine. The horns are worth tens of thousands of dollars in illegal Asian markets. Rhino numbers in Africa have dropped significantly in recent decades to feed demand for rhino horn especially in China and Vietnam. Poachers killed 61 black and 26 white rhinos mainly in Namibia's largest park, Etosha, where 46 rhinos were found dead, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism spokesperson Romeo Muyunda said. "We note with serious concern that our flagship park, Etosha National Park, is a poaching hotspot," Mr Muyunda said.

International criminal gangs are reported to use sophisticated equipment to track and tranquilize the animals before hacking off the horn, leaving them bleeding to death. Apart from Namibia, also poaching in South Africa and Botswana has led to wildlife teams sawing off the rhino horns in order to keep them alive. For many generations rhino horn has been used in traditional Chinese medicine although there is no proven medical benefit. Poaching has also been fueled by demand in Vietnam, where horns are displayed as a sign of wealth. Globally there just over 26,000 rhinos of all species left

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