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Backlogs in court cases remain frustrating

Claudia Rider

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WINDHOEK (cr) – Anti-poaching initiatives arrested 75 suspects in 106 rhino poaching cases in 2022, according to a recent report. In the same year, the number of rhinos poached nationwide was the highest since 2015, according to the National Report on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in Namibia.

The report is based on data compiled via the Integrated Database of Wildlife Crime in Namibia, among others, as well as information from members of the Blue Rhino Task Team, the Ministry of the Environment and the Namibian Police.

The report notes that the number of rhinos known to have been poached in 2022 increased 97.9 percent from 2021, hitting the highest losses since 2015.

A worrying trend is also evident in the replacement of rhino horns. “The number of rhinos seized by law enforcement has decreased significantly – only five horns were seized while 93 rhinos were poached.

However, according to the report, rhinos are not the only resources being targeted. “The trade in tusks and pangolin products continues, and we are seeing an expansion of the criminal onslaught into new areas, such as the trade in our rare and endemic plants. In total, 693 suspects were arrested in 430 cases of wildlife trafficking in 2022. Meat poaching continues to account for about half of all recorded cases,” the report said.

It also notes that the number of closed rhino poaching cases remains frustratingly low. “Only four cases of rhino hunting were closed last year. To make matters worse, suspects released on bail in lengthy rhino trials have been re-arrested in new cases.”