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- AT LEAST 13 YEARS BEHIND BARS FOR RHINO POACHING



rhino

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Yandy Du Plessis

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Ellanie Smit - The Ministry of the Environment, Forestry and Tourism has welcomed sentences of at least 13 years in prison each for four rhino poachers.

The sentences were handed down recently in the Windhoek Regional Court.

Former Brave Warriors chiropractor Gerson Kandjii (51) was also involved in the case, but died in custody in 2021.

The arrests stem from an incident in December 2016, when four white rhinos were poached on a private farm in Gobabis district.

On 22 December 2016, the suspects reportedly killed four white rhinos – two bulls and two pregnant cows, each worth N\$1.25 million – with a total value of N\$5 million without a hunting permit.

The other accused in the case are Zee Shekumba, who worked on the farm where the poaching happened, Erwin Tjiteere, Domingo Justice Moma and David Stephanus.

STRONG MESSAGE

According to the ministry, Magistrate Johannes Shuuvani's judgment shows that the court understands the seriousness of the case, especially because he did not allow the option of a fine.

It will also serve as a strong message that poaching in Namibia has serious consequences, says the ministry.

The ministry's spokesperson, Romeo Muyunda, said the trial concluded on September 18, while sentencing took place on October 4.

"The accused are facing charges of hunting protected wildlife, theft of rhinoceros horns, willful damage to property and illegal entry."

All four defendants were found guilty on three of the four charges, Muyunda said.

They were acquitted of the charge of willful damage to property.

SENTENCES

The sentences included 15 years in prison - five of which were suspended - for hunting specially protected wildlife.

Shekumba, Tjiteere, Moma and Stephanus also received six years, of which three were suspended, for stealing the rhino horns.

Three of the four defendants were sentenced to one year in prison, suspended for six months, for trespassing.

The ministry once again appealed to members of the public to condemn poaching by reporting suspected incidents to the police or the ministry.

– republikein@republikein.com.na