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Windhoek (cr) • Judge Johannes Shuuveni sentenced four rhino poachers to 13 years in prison on September 18th.

The late Gerson Kandjii, a former chiropractor for the national football team, was also implicated in the matter. The arrests follow a poaching incident in December 2016 in which four white rhinos were killed on a private farm in Gobabis district.

The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism said in a press statement that it welcomed the prison sentences, which did not include a fine.

The defendants were charged with hunting specially protected game, theft of nose horns, malicious damage to property and trespassing.

All four defendants were convicted on three of four counts. The court's verdict is: 15 years in prison, including five years probation, for hunting specially protected game. Six years, including three years probation, for stealing the nose horns. Three of the four defendants were sentenced to one year with six months probation for trespassing. All were acquitted of the charge of malicious damage to property.

“Magistrate Shuuveni’s verdict demonstrates the seriousness of the offense committed and the judiciary’s understanding of the impact of rhino poaching on conservation and the benefits associated with it. “This also sends a clear message that rhino poaching in Namibia has serious consequences and that those involved must be warned or will suffer the same fate,” said the Environment Ministry.