

# Namibia scores extradition success



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SCAN ME

Namibia's recent success in returning a fugitive from South Africa to stand trial has underscored the importance of cooperating with Interpol to adhere to the complexities of the extradition process worldwide.

The International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol)'s National Central Bureau (NCB) in Windhoek focusses its global police cooperation activities around Namibia's crime areas of concern, including wildlife crime (particularly stock theft), drug crime, money-laundering, firearms' trafficking and human trafficking.

The Namibian Police (Nampol) uses its Interpol NCB to collaborate with police forces globally in investigating crimes, and bringing offenders to justice.

## Local extraditions

Interpol has successfully extradited more than 21 fugitives in recent years, leaving behind a mixed legacy.

The earliest successful extradition seen by *New Era* was that of Jason Awene, who was posted from South Africa in 2006. He faced charges of armed robbery committed in Windhoek in 2004. The most recent extradition was that of Maria Johanna Coetzee, who arrived in Namibia last week after a South African court ruled her extraditable in March 2024. She was handed over to the Namibian Police on Thursday morning at the Cape Town International Airport after two police officers travelled to South Africa to retrieve her.

She had been in custody there since her arrest in 2023. Deputy Commissioner Matthew Shipanga, head of Interpol in Namibia, highlighted the smooth process in Coetzee's case. He attributed the success to the timely issuance of an order by the South African minister of justice on 30 July 2024 for her return to Namibia for prosecution.

He noted that the South African court had ruled Coetzee extraditable, following a formal request by Namibian authorities.

Namibia benefits from strong relationships within the Interpol community, which enhances operational effectiveness.

However, challenges persist, particularly with formal documents not reaching the relevant jurisdictions on time, Shipanga noted. "There is a law according to the Namibian Extradition Act 11 of 1996, as amended, that all formal documents related to an extradition request must reach the jurisdiction of the requested country within 30 days upon the provisional arrest of a wanted person. Failure to do so may result in the court finding the fugitive non-extraditable," he added. This delay was one of the reasons which key persons of interest, such as Nivelles Buxmann – a South African national accused of fraud charges, who was released by the Namibian courts early this year – has not yet been extradited. Shipanga emphasised the benefits of strong relationships within the Interpol community, despite the generally lengthy and cumbersome extradition process between member countries.

Coetzee (52) had been on the run from Namibian authorities since 2020 after failing to appear in court for trial.

She allegedly stole N\$2.8 million from the Windhoek International School by transferring the funds into her accounts.

Although the total amount she allegedly stole was N\$3.8 million, the difference has been recovered. The former financial manager at the school faces 18 charges of fraud and money-laundering. She failed to appear in the Windhoek High Court for a pre-trial hearing in May 2020.

The court later learned that Coetzee, who was free on bail of N\$10 000, had been traced to Pretoria, South Africa. The alleged fraud and money-laundering occurred between March and October 2018. She was granted bail in March 2019. The accused appeared in the Windhoek High Court on Friday, and the case has been postponed to 17 October for trial. She is currently in the Windhoek Correctional Facility, awaiting prosecution.

## Interpol in Namibia

Namibia became a member of Interpol in 1992 – and since then, the NCB has been a crucial link between Namibian law-enforcement and the global Interpol network.

The NCB facilitates international cooperation in combating transnational crime by coordinating communication and intelligence-sharing with other member countries, assisting in international investigations, and supporting extradition processes by gathering necessary documentation and issuing Red Notices for wanted individuals.

Namibia has extradition authority within all Southern African Development Community (SADC) members and other countries worldwide.

## Extradition criteria

Shipanga stated that for an individual to qualify for extradition, the offence committed must be punishable by at least six months' imprisonment.

The latest fugitive to be extradited, Coetzee arrived in Namibia last week after being found extraditable by the Wynberg Court in Cape Town, South Africa. Over the years, Interpol has been

involved in numerous high-profile cases which have captured public attention.

Among the notable successes was the extradition of notorious poacher Mike Banza, also known as Francis Kasongo, who was extradited from Botswana in March 2020 after escaping lawful custody in 2015 at Kongola.

Another success story is that of Charles Namiseb, who is currently serving a 57-year prison sentence after being extradited from South Africa to Namibia in 2018.

Namiseb was convicted of robbery, rape and vehicle theft. In 2016, Michael Shanyenge was extradited to South Africa, where he was wanted on various charges.

Additionally, Vito Roberto Palazzolo, wanted by Italy on charges of criminal association with the Mafia, was arrested and extradited to Italy in 2013.

Another successful extradition involved Marthinus Pretorius, a South African national, who was wanted in connection with charges of rape, human trafficking and violations of Namibia's Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA).

In 2012, he exploited three Namibian minors, aged 12, 13 and 17.

He allegedly lured them individually to his residence on separate occasions, engaged in sexual intercourse with them, and provided them with money after each encounter.

An adult woman who assisted him was also convicted as an accomplice.

“Pretorius fled Namibia for South Africa on 22 July 2012. After five years as a fugitive, he was extradited back to Namibia on 14 July 2017. On 15 March 2022, the High Court of Namibia sentenced him to an effective 30-year prison term, which he is currently serving,” said Shipanga. Another significant case was the pursuit of former magistrate Walter ‘Rooies’ Mostert, who escaped from custody following a court appearance.

He was later arrested after appearing on Interpol's Red Notice database at the borders while trying to return to Namibia.

“He was not extradited, but his arrest sent a powerful message that even those who commit heinous crimes can be held accountable with international cooperation,” he continued.

Wanted

Despite the successes, the police are urgently seeking global assistance in tracking down the most wanted individuals, especially four dangerous fugitives on Red Notices with provisional warrants of arrest.

Shipanga mentioned that Interpol is actively searching for Victoria Namene Shikoyeni, a fugitive wanted in South Africa for attempted murder and the kidnapping of a minor. She was arrested in Swakopmund on 13 April 2021, and was granted bail with conditions to sign in at the Swakopmund Central Police Station on Mondays and Fridays. However, since early December 2021, she had violated her bail conditions, and has been on the run ever since.

Attempts to arrest her have been unsuccessful to date. “She is suspected to be living with a relative in Oshakati since January 2022. The fugitive is considered dangerous and a flight risk,” said Shipanga. He appealed to the public for information leading to her arrest.

Another fugitive desperately wanted by Interpol is David Johannes Oiva, described as dangerous, a flight risk and violent.

He is wanted in connection with a robbery committed in Karibib. Shipanga said on 13 February 2014 in Omaruru, Oiva impersonated a police officer by dressing in a police uniform, and forging police appointment certificates.

He, along with four accomplices, then conducted a roadblock, kidnapped a victim, and robbed him at gunpoint.

“We want him. He is apparently in South Africa, but it is just a matter of time before we get him as soon as the extradition inquiry is finalised,” he stated. Among the 20 fugitives also still at large is prominent Chinese businessman Wang Hui, who reportedly escaped from lawful custody on 17 October 2022. He was serving his sentence in the Windhoek Correctional Facility after being arrested in 2014 at the Hosea Kutako International Airport in Windhoek for the possession and trafficking of 14 rhino horns.

He was subsequently sentenced to 15 years in prison.

## Red Notice

A Red Notice issued by Interpol is a request to law-enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest an individual pending extradition, surrender or similar legal action.

“It is based on an arrest warrant or court order issued by the judicial authorities in the requesting country. While not an international arrest warrant itself, it serves as an alert to member countries about individuals wanted for serious crimes like murder, rape or fraud,” clarified Shipanga.

Currently, Interpol Namibia has 20 fugitives on the Red Notice list, including prominent lawyer Maren de Klerk, who is wanted by Namibia for alleged serious crimes. He was successfully arrested for extradition in South Africa, but was later released by authorities because the documents submitted for extradition did not comply with South Africa’s new extradition regulations.

Shipanga said Namibian authorities are making significant progress in submitting the necessary documentation to ensure his return to face prosecution.

“These are some of the challenges Interpol encounters during the process. Some states change their regulations, and when submissions are made, courts may find them not in line with the new guidelines,” he stated.

De Klerk is wanted for trial in Namibia for racketeering, fraud, corruption and money-laundering in connection with the Fishrot case, wherein Namibia’s fisheries resources were allegedly stolen at industrial scale.

An arrest warrant and extradition notice were approved by the Paarl Magistrate’s Court in 2022 – but due to errors on the application forms, he was found non-extraditable.

Another fugitive on the Red Notice list is Ebson Tumbireeko, suspected to be in Angola, and wanted for a double murder which took place on a farm in the Omapyu area of the Omaruru district.

The fugitive absconded after implicating himself in the case, which was committed in 2009. He was arrested, but later escaped from custody at the Omaruru police station in February 2010, and remains at large.

Mervin Hanse (34) is also on a Red Notice after escaping from custody at the Windhoek Correctional Facility. He escaped along with two other trial-awaiting prisoners. Due to space constraints, other fugitives known to *New Era* cannot be listed.

## Challenges

The extradition process is described as generally smooth but with minor challenges, mostly related to time constraints and improperly-authenticated documents during the paperwork process from diplomatic offices.

Shipanga listed other obstacles as amendments to countries' guidelines on extraditions, and the authentication of documents by diplomatic offices as challenges that have kept more than 20 fugitives on the Red Notice list, with four particularly dangerous individuals evading extradition. - [ljason@nepc.com.na](mailto:ljason@nepc.com.na)