

# Times LIVE

## Mozambican rhino poachers in Kruger National Park hit with hefty jail terms

Poachers caught near carcasses sent down for 23 years

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Two Mozambicans rhino poachers in the Kruger National Park have been jailed for 23 years.

*Image: 123RF/Stuart Porter*

Two poachers caught with a high-powered rifle and poaching equipment close to the carcasses of two rhinos have each been sentenced to 23 years in jail.

The Mozambicans were arrested in the Satara section of the Kruger National Park in May 2019 by rangers.

Isaac Phaahla, spokesperson for SANParks, said the hefty sentences for the convicted poachers were handed down by the Skukuza regional court.

He said Americo Mathonsi, 59, and Michael Chauke, 57, were caught by rangers who responded to the sounds of gunfire and found the rhino carcasses with horns still intact.

He said the two men were found nearby with poaching equipment. The men were found guilty of trespassing in a national park, killing the rhinos which are protected species, possession of an illegal firearm and ammunition, contravening the Immigration Act and possession of dangerous weapons.

Gareth Coleman, managing executive of the KNP, commended the team that made the arrests and congratulated the prosecution.

“Our continued collaboration with the SA Police Service and the National Prosecuting Authority is bearing results seen in the sentences that have been meted out by the courts,” he said.

“There’s still more to be done, especially outside the park ... but our anti- poaching teams will be encouraged by these sentences which prove that their efforts are not in vain.”

Skukuza regional court is expected to finalise several high-profile poaching cases this year including that of former KNP regional ranger Rodney Landela, whose trial is set for June.

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