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Rhino Slaughter: As Poaching Escalates DA Calls for Secretive KZN Rhino Report to be Shared

By
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Rhino Slaughter: As Poaching Escalates DA Calls for Secretive KZN Rhino Report to be Shared. Photo: iStockPhoto / Alberto Masnovi

At least 71 rhino have been poached this year alone in Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife parks, putting KZN on the road to the species facing extinction in the region within the next five years!

This shocking revelation – allegedly by sources within the organisation – has prompted the Democratic Alliance (DA) to submit a Public Access to Information Application (PAIA) to unlock the findings of a critical probe, undertaken by the government, into rhino poaching.

The report was originally commissioned by KZN's provincial cabinet in 2016 and handed to the Premier on completion in 2020. It allegedly details all aspects of the Ezemvelo entity that has led to rhino poaching in KZN.

The DA said today that as the slaughter of rhino continues unabated in Ezemvelo parks, there has been silence from both the provincial Executive and Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) MEC, Ravi Pillay. The DA added that this exponential rise in poaching has also been absent from recent committee meetings.

"The DA's decision to submit a PAIA to Premier Sihle Zikalala's office in an attempt to finally have the secretive Report of the Task Team into Rhino Poaching in KZN released comes after **years of delays**," says DA KZN spokesperson on EDTEA, Heinz de Boer.

He said despite repeated attempts by the DA to have the report released, the "Office of the **Premier (OTP) has flatly refused to do so**. It has also

refused to table the report before KZN's Conservation and Environmental Affairs portfolio committee.

"The question is – where is MEC Pillay in all of this? And why is it left to the DA to fight for the release of a report which has the potential to save our rhinos?" asked De Boer.

The DA believes many of the fundamental issues raised in the report may have already been discussed in committee, but believes the report could serve as a tool to hone in on the **critical action needed to curb poaching which, the opposition party says, must include the following:**

- An urgent cash injection into the field ranger component to not only employ rangers who have already been trained – but to adequately equip field staff
- This must include new rifles, ammunition, bulletproof vests, night vision equipment and thermal drones to take the fight to the poaching syndicates and;
- A fully revised budget to equip staff and provide the basics such as helicopter support and fuel for vehicles. These are the basics that field staff need now to win the fight against poaching, says the DA.

"The DA expects the Premier and his MEC to immediately act on this growing emergency by immediately taking both the public and KZN's Conservation portfolio committee into their confidence and releasing the report. This must be coupled with a strong political will to empower those in the field through clear budgetary action plans," said De Boer.