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- [NEWS](#)
- [ENTERTAINMENT](#)
- [VIDEOS](#)
- [SA EXPATS](#)
- [WILDLIFE](#)
- [TRAVEL](#)
- [SPORT](#)
- [RECIPES](#)
- [CONTACT](#)

- [Eish!](#)
- [News](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Wildlife & Animals](#)

DA to Study Elusive Rhino Poaching Report as KZN Killings Soar to 108 So Far This Year

By

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DA to Scrutinize Elusive Rhino Poaching Report as KZN 2022 Killings Reach 108. Photo: iStockPhoto

Commissioned six years ago and kept under lock and key by the Office of the KZN Premier until now, the hidden report into rhino poaching in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) has been *partially released* to the Democratic Alliance (DA) following extensive pressure.

Last month the DA submitted a Public Access to Information Application (PAIA) for the report, and said today it welcomes the concession by KZN Environmental Affairs' Ravi Pillay, as an important "first step" in getting to grips with the poaching in the province.

At last count, rhino poaching figures this year so far (just over four months) have surpassed the total for 2021, with 108 rhino killed by poachers for their horns which are smuggled to countries like China and Vietnam.

In his recent budget debate responses, Pillay assured the KZN Legislature that he would make a copy of the report available to the DA. He would not, however, commit to public disclosure as the report allegedly contains sensitive information linked to ongoing anti-poaching investigations.

The DA received part one of the report yesterday.

“It will now undergo our scrutiny – and will be available for any interested and affected parties to read,” said Heinz de Boer – DA KZN Spokesperson on EDTEA. “While we respect the partial release, we firmly believe that all reports funded by taxpayers should ultimately be made available to all interested and affected parties.

“Moreover, the DA believes any sensitive anti-poaching findings within the report should immediately have been acted upon when it was first submitted to the Premier’s office two years ago.

Once studied, the DA will be in a better position to understand whether the report is now dated or whether it is still relevant and thereafter formulate an action plan to have it made public.”

The DA says KZN’s EDTEA must urgently commit to:

- Finding additional funding to employ more rangers and properly equip them;

- Put permanent task teams in place to take the fight to poaching syndicates and;
- Establish a public and transparent incident reporting system so that the public can track “contacts” and shooting incidents within Ezemvelo parks.

A broad picture of the war in the parks is critical for provincial government, NGOs and the KZN’s public to understand the plight of this species, says the DA.