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World Rhino Day only served to highlight grim poaching statistics, with 90% of the incidents in South Africa

According to a report published on August 22 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), from 2018 to 2021, 2 707 rhinos were poached across the African continent, 90% of them in South Africa. Picture: Armand Hough

Published Sep 22, 2022

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This World Rhino Day, the picture painted by conservationists isn't a pretty one.

Celebrated annually on September 2 with an aim to spread awareness about the critically endangered species and educate the general public about the danger these majestic species have been facing, it's safe to say that rhinos in Africa are under siege.

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About 82 rhinos were poached in Kruger National Park alone this year, according to wionews.com.

Poaching and illegal trade in rhinos remains a concern in Africa. According to a report published on August 22 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), from 2018 to 2021, 2 707 rhinos were poached across the African continent, 90% of them in South Africa.

While there has been an easing of human pressure on rhino, including the rest of the wildlife due to restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, trafficking resumed just after the restrictions were lifted in 2021, citing a report by green economy and environment website Afrik21.

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Overall, the African rhino population has declined by about 1.6% per year, from an estimated 23,562 individuals in 2018 to 22,137 at the end of 2021, the article revealed.

Severe climate change and extreme disturbances to their natural ecosystem have also been blamed for the drop in rhino populations.

Conservationists say that more needs to be done to protect them.

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According to the official site of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), at the beginning of the 20th century there were 500 000 rhinos roaming Africa and Asia. However, by 1970, this number dropped to 70 000. Today, sadly, about 27 000 rhinos remain in the wild.

Of all the five species, three — black, Javan and Sumatran — are critically endangered. World Rhino Day holds immense significance in urging the authorities and the general public to think on behalf of them.

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World Rhino Day was announced by the World Wide Fund for Nature South Africa in 2010.

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