



NEWS CRIME AND COURTS

Rhino poacher jailed for 17 years, while his accomplice is still on the run



Picture: Reuters

Published 8h ago



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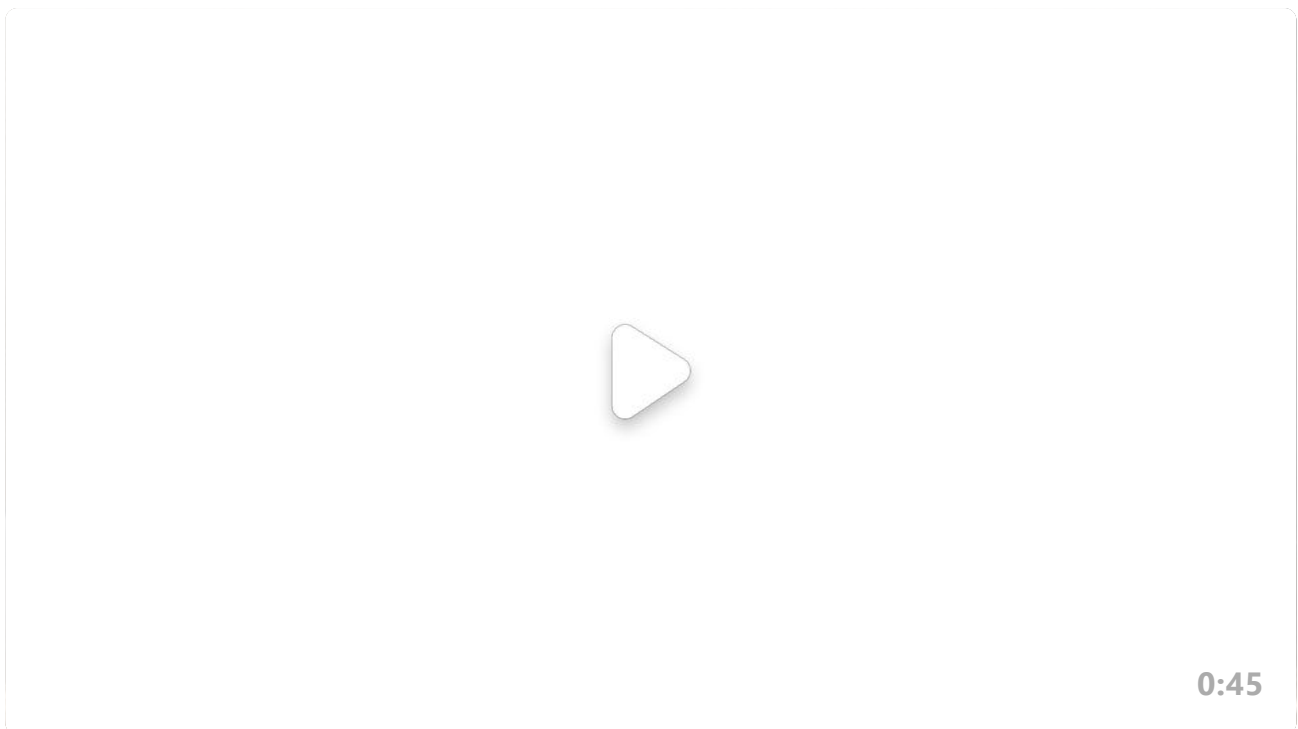
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Durban - A 40-year-old man convicted of rhino poaching has received a lengthy jail term.

The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) said Sylvester Zitha was convicted on Tuesday in the Skukuza Regional Court in Mpumalanga and sentenced to 17 years behind bars.

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Zitha was convicted on a host of [poaching-related offences](#) which included trespassing, possession of a firearm with a silencer, possession of ammunition, killing of a rhino, possession of an axe and conspiracy to commit an offence.



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NPA provincial spokesperson, Monica Nyuswa said that on October 19, 2019, rangers found a dead rhino and followed the tracks.

“They found Zitha and Ricardo Phiri, at the Tshokwane section of Skukuza, in possession of a hunting rifle and two fresh rhino horns.

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“Both were subsequently arrested, while Phiri, who was granted bail, absconded,” she said.

In court, Zitha pleaded not guilty and State prosecutor Lot Mgiba led evidence of police and two field rangers who apprehended the accused.

The NPA said the State was able to provide the court with proof that Zitha did kill the rhino.

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In [welcoming the sentence](#), the NPA said rhino poaching hurt the economy and tourism sector.

According to a report, a total of [259 rhinos were poached](#) for their horn in South Africa in the first six months of 2022, The Mercury reported.

Barbara Creecy, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environments said the demand for rhino horn remains a constant threat to rhino populations as crime syndicates continue to operate within our borders.

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