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## Mtubatuba rhino poaching accused plead not guilty

The case first went to trial in 2018 but has been plagued with many delays

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(file photo) During one of his court appearances at the Ngwelezana Magistrate's Court last year, alleged rhino poacher Dumisani Gwala threatened ZO journalist Muzi Zincume when he photographed him  
PHOTO: Muzi Zincume

Wiseman Mageba and his co-accused Dumisani Gwala have pleaded not guilty to rhino poaching allegations in a case which resumed at Mtubatuba Regional Court today (Tuesday).

The pair face a combined 12 charges relating to the alleged illegal purchase and possession of rhino horn, resisting arrest, and attempted murder.

The case first went to trial in 2018 but has been plagued with many delays that have tested the patience of the court.

Accused two, Gwala, on count 11 is charged with resisting arrest and trying to disarm a police officer in the Manguzi area, and on count 12, the alleged attempted murder of the same police officer.

Mageba, who faces counts 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8, pleaded not guilty to all the charges, while Gwala, who faces counts 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 and 12, told the court 'I don't know anything'.

Mpume Linda, for accused one, said the defence will argue during trial that the SAPS operation resulting in the arrest of her client was 'malicious, unlawful', and a 'corrupt act'.

Zwelonke Ngwenya, for accused two, said his client 'would like to exercise his constitutional right to remain silent'.

The presiding officer, Magistrate Anand Maharaj, adjourned the proceedings until 1pm to allow both accused's legal counsel to go through the transcript of the testimony of a witness who gave evidence in the previous proceedings of the matter.

Police were present at the court, including two armed officers in the gallery.