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IFP calls for urgent action to curb rhino poaching in KZN, Kruger



The IFP says the rhino poaching statistics released by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment are concerning. File Picture: Armand Hough African News Agency (ANA).

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Durban – The IFP in KwaZulu-Natal said it was concerned about the rhino poaching incidents taking place in KZN and the Kruger National Park.

Steven Moodley, IFP KZN provincial spokesperson on Environmental Affairs, said that according to statistics released by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, in the first six months of 2023, 231 rhinos were killed in South Africa.

“Forty-two rhinos were poached in the Kruger National Park and 143 in KZN from January to June 2023. This is a calamity that simply cannot be ignored. Current statistics indicate horrendous downward tendencies in rhino populations countrywide. Rhino poaching is continuing unabated.”

Moodley added that the IFP would continue to champion any efforts to safeguard and preserve the country’s precious natural heritage – including endangered species.

“The current situation is rapidly developing into the long-feared complete decimation of all rhino species on Earth, exacerbated by greed on the one hand, and the inability of conservation bodies on the other hand to find solutions to the dilemma.”

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Moodley said the IFP believed the government had to provide immediate funding to fight this scourge.

“It is an undisputed fact that poaching presents a critical threat to wildlife-based tourism operations in KZN. Poaching and illegal wildlife trade are not only affecting the conservation of the targeted species, which are already endangered in many places, they are also increasingly threatening the livelihoods and security of the affected human populations.”

Moodley said the party had noted that Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife acquired its first SACAA Remote Operating Certificates (ROC) Licence, which enabled the entity to legally operate drones in controlled and uncontrolled airspaces.

“While Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife intends to use drones in anti-poaching, and search and rescue, among other initiatives, the IFP believes that more still needs to be done to address rhino poaching. Our suggestion on this issue of rhino poaching is to first gather intelligence, so that we can take decisions from an informed position.”

Moodley said state security needed to gather intelligence on rhino poaching in South Africa.

“The three essential elements needed to fight this crisis are: ramping up anti-poaching measures, shutting down illegal trade routes using state-of-the-art technology along the whole trade chain, and supporting efforts to reduce the demand for illegal wildlife.”

Moodley said the IFP was calling for a nationwide investigation into possible collusion between wildlife rangers and poachers who were killing rhinos.

“We also urge courts to ensure that the punishment befits the severity of the crime. Perpetrators must not be allowed to walk away and continue destroying our heritage. Communities must also expose poachers in their respective areas.”

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