

Opinion

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By Editorial staff Journalist

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Harsh jail sentences way to end war on rhino poaching

Unless we start dishing out harsher sentences to send out a strong message globally, the war on rhino poaching is never going to end.



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In the Kruger National Park rhino numbers are believed to have dropped from 10 000 to under 3 000 in past 15 years. Photo: Amanda Watson

It's not rocket science. Harsher sentences – both locally and abroad – need to be dished out to those who poach rhinos for their horns, or smuggle those horns to other countries.

The South African government reported 448 rhinos were killed across the country in 2022 – just three fewer than the previous year.

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Rhino horn smuggler slapped with two years behind bars

It's welcoming to hear a Singapore court on Friday sentenced Gumed Sthembiso Joel, a 33-year-old South African man, to two years in jail for smuggling rhino horns. It was the heaviest sentence handed down by the city state for trafficking wildlife parts.

ALSO READ: [Coffee beans, plants and print cartridges: Here's how smugglers conceal rhino horns](#)

Joel was arrested at Singapore's Changi airport in 2022 after authorities found 20 pieces of rhino horn, weighing 34.7kg in his bags. He was travelling from South Africa to Laos through Singapore. It's believed the haul was worth almost R17 million.

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District judge Eddy Tham said "the harm caused is clearly greater".

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War on poaching

Tham is right, and unless we start dishing out harsher sentences to send out a strong message globally, the war on rhino poaching is never going to end.

Just like copper cable theft that continues to hamper our power supply, our government needs to make a statement that it means business. Harsh jail sentences are needed. Failure will only end tragically

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