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## SA: Zimbabweans convicted of rhino poaching, illegal possession of arms

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SOUTH AFRICA: Six Zimbabwean nationals have been found guilty in the Makhanda High Court of conspiracy to commit rhino poaching and illegal possession of firearms.

They'll be back in court on the 4th of November for the start of sentencing proceedings.

The court heard previously that information uncovered relating to the crimes of the accused dates back to before their arrest in 2018.

It included the tracking of their cellphones which was later linked to rhino poaching incidents at Kragga Kamma and Shamwari Game Reserves.

In his reaction to Friday's verdict handed down by Judge Gerald Bloem, state prosecutor Buks Coetzee noted that as far as he's aware, there have been no rhino poached in the Eastern Cape since the 6 accused were incarcerated in July of 2018.

"Now there are other matters that we also intend to start prosecuting for conspiracy to rhino poach," said Coetzee.

"So this judgement sets a very important precedent for us to use in similar matters. On the 4th of November we will argue for sentence and hopefully suitable long-term imprisonment will be imposed as well."

Kragga Kamma game park's Ayesha Cantor also attended Friday's court proceedings and said the Eastern Cape was clearly a beacon of hope in the fight against rhino poaching.

"Our judicial system is robust, our prosecutors are passionate and our judges actually understand the plight of the rhino," she said.

"We are always sending out a strong message that if you come poach in the Eastern Cape you are not going to get bail, you are going to sit in jail and you are more than likely going to be prosecuted – which is very different to many other provinces in South Africa."

