

# After 110-kilo ivory bust, familiar questions over Kenya's follow-through

In late January, Kenyan authorities arrested two men in possession of [more than a hundred kilos of ivory](#) in the town of Namanga, on the border with Tanzania.

According to Kenya's [Directorate of Criminal Investigations \(DCI\)](#), police and wildlife officers were on a covert operation at a hotel when they caught three men — identified as Imani Manasi Msumbwa and Justin Mwalima, both Tanzanian, and Alton Jilaoneka, a Kenyan — likely negotiating a deal. Mwalima escaped; the remaining two led investigators to a car with 20 pieces of elephant tusks, weighing a total 110 kilograms (243 pounds). They were arrested, and news of the seizure [made headlines](#).

Since then, however, it's not clear what progress has been made, either in finding the escaped suspect or in identifying the prospective buyer or the wider trafficking network.

Despite repeated inquiries from Mongabay, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) officials have declined to confirm whether those arrested were granted bail or if they remain in custody.

Chris Morris, founder of Nairobi-based wildlife crime monitoring group Saving Elephants through Education and Justice (SEEJ), told Mongabay that the suspects are scheduled to appear in Kajiado Magistrate's Court on April 28.

SEEJ [monitored more than 100 elephant ivory trafficking prosecutions](#) between 2023 and 2025 to assess the integrity of law enforcement in pursuing trafficking cases beyond the headline arrests. Some of the offences date back to 2015. By the end of its two-year monitoring period, only 72 of the 125 cases had concluded, with a conviction rate of 61%. SEEJ deemed 18 cases as "corrupted" and 41 as showing signs of potential tampering.

Morris, a former war crimes investigator, said Kenyan prosecutors show little enthusiasm for pursuing trafficking cases beyond the low-level smugglers caught in possession. "In the 11 years I have been in Kenya, the KWS have never given any indication that they investigate any of these arrests or seizures to the next level," he told Mongabay. "If they do, that evidence has never made it into court."

The January arrests were carried out with support from the Lusaka Agreement Task Force, a collaboration established in 1999 between wildlife law enforcement agencies in East and Southern African countries.

"This operation sends a clear message that transnational wildlife crime will not find safe passage in our region," the task force said in a [January statement](#). "Its success demonstrates the power of effective collaboration, coordinated action, trust, timely information exchange and shared responsibility among agencies and partners in disrupting organised criminal networks that threaten Africa's wildlife and security."

Mongabay contacted the LATF about the subsequent investigation of those organized networks following the January arrests, but received no response as of the time this article was published.

Ivory seizure statistics from KWS are [not publicly available](#), but [several recent news reports](#) suggest that trafficking is an ongoing problem.

***Banner image:*** *Two suspects were arrested in Kenya in January with 110 kg of ivory. Image courtesy of Freeland (Fair Use).*

