

Gaan Ons die Renosterstryd verloor?

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Fanatical IARF Threatens Boycotts against SA

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While environmental groups have threatened to boycott the agricultural and tourism industries if the South African government fails to protect rhinos from becoming extinct, more and more voices of reason are going up to put the rhino mania in perspective.

The fanatical International Animal Rescue Foundation (IARF) has reportedly drawn more than 11 500 signatures on social networks in the past few weeks.

The ultimatum has led to a public parliamentary hearing on January 26 where the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs will aim to find solutions to the poaching crisis.

The foundation is demanding that the government stop issuing rhino trophy hunting permits, stop the sale of state owned rhino, commission a census of the rhino population in South Africa, and destroy all stock-piled rhino horn.

The ultimatum will be delivered on February 22 to government ministers, including President Jacob Zuma, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe, Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, and Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa.

The government will then have until April 22 to meet the foundation's requirements, or face a boycott of agricultural and service exports.

According to the foundation, two rhino sub-species – the Western African black rhino and the Northern white rhino – were declared extinct in November by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. The Javan rhino of Southeast Asia may also be extinct.

However, banning rhino hunting altogether could actually increase the poaching rate. According to Siegfried Kuhm, CEO of the KZN Hunting and Conservation Association, as long as hunting is done on a sustainable, ethical, and legal basis, it has a rightful place in society.

"Stop hunting and you stop wildlife. Very few people will travel large distances to view a single or a few animals. Hunters will travel thousands of kilometres to hunt a single animal."

* Also read a summary of articles by David Cook and Michael Eustace elsewhere in Pot-Shot .

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Heavy Sentences Will Deter Poaching

06 Feb 2012

Water and Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa has welcomed the 25-year sentences imposed on three Mozambican rhino poachers by the Phalaborwa Regional Court and added that it would send a strong message to poachers and act as a deterrent.

Aselmo Baloyi, Jawaki Nkuna and Ismael Baloyi were found guilty on four counts including illegal hunting of rhino, possession of a prohibited firearm, possession of a firearm and possession of ammunition.

Tuesday's sentence comes at a time when government has stepped up measures to combat rhino poaching, such as deploying the South African National Defence Force to monitor the 350 km of international border of the Kruger National Park, as well as the deployment of conservation specialists at ports through which the trade in endangered species can be exported and imported.

The department and South African National Parks are also in the process of beefing up patrols in the Kruger National Park with the deployment of an additional 150 rangers, while bilateral engagements between South Africa and Mozambique to deal with cross-border law enforcement are also ongoing.

South Africans have been urged to report any illegal rhino activities on 0800 205 005.

ee Mozambican citizens were each sentenced on Tuesday to 25 years imprisonment by a court in the South African town of Phalaborwa for poaching rhinoceros in the Kruger National Park.

The South African authorities also announced that 232 suspects were arrested in connection with rhino poaching in South Africa in 2011. These included 194 rhino poachers, 24 receivers of rhino horns, 12 couriers and two exporters.

Tom Milliken, East and Southern Africa director of Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce — better known as TRAFFIC — said: "It's a very tough sentence and could be establishing a new record in South Africa. ... We have now moved into serious deterrence territory, at last. But the proof in the pudding will be if those South African game-industry white guys who are involved in rhino crime get similar sentences. Then we'll start to see things turned around."

One of these, suspected poaching kingpin Dawie Groenewald, and 10 others, arrested in 2010, are expected to appear in a Limpopo court in April to face almost 2000 charges, including money laundering, fraud, racketeering and the illegal trade of rhino horns.

Richard Emslie, a rhino expert at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, said if racketeering was proved, it carried a maximum sentence of imprisonment for life.

* Meanwhile, an estimated 240 park's staff, the majority of whom are rangers, are striking over wage disparities, with their notice to strike saying the action would continue until such time as their demands were met. Mabasa said negotiations had deadlocked.

* And Zimbabwean artist Dolfi Stoki released a controversial painting on to the international art market to raise awareness of the plight of rhino. The work depicts a South African R10 note, which features a rhino, but this time the rhino has its horn hacked off.

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Mozambique Holds Key to Poaching Solution

14 Jan 2012

[In Afrikaans]

Rhino poaching in the Kruger National Park and surrounds – where more than 250 rhinos were poached in 2011 – can only be properly addressed if there is close cooperation with Mozambique's police and military. That, however, requires intervention at government level.

That is the opinion of Ken Maggs, head of the National Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit that was set up last year as an umbrella body to co-ordinate efforts between various state bodies and private reserve owners in the fight against rhino killings.

Pot-Shot has been reliably informed that talks at a very high level involving Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe and top Mozambican government officials may well be in the offing.

While the country was still reeling from the record number of 448 rhino poached in South Africa in 2011, the news broke that eight rhino carcasses were found in the Kruger National Park last week.

It is disconcerting that 252 of the rhinos poached last year were shot in Kruger. Three carcasses were discovered in the Lower Sabie section of the park and five in the Pretoriuskop area.

In early December two white rhinos were found shot in a private park in a mountainous region north of Johannesburg and a day later a black rhino was found shot near the Zimbabwean border.

On 7 December four white rhinos were killed in private reserves just outside the western boundary of Kruger National Park. Two days thereafter the carcasses of five rhinos were found in Kruger.

On 12 December newspapers report on a gruesome mutilation of a rhino bull and cow in a private reserve in the Western Cape. They were darted and had their horns hacked off with a machete. Both could be revived with antidotes, but the cow had to have her unborn calf aborted. The use of the specialized drug, called M99 could point to the involvement of veterinarians.

It was unlucky 13 December for a poacher who got wounded in a shootout with park rangers and soldiers in Kruger. Two other suspects escaped across the border into Mozambique. Four fresh rhino horns were recovered.

Despite the increased security presence, 244 rhinos were killed in Kruger, which is home to about 10 000 to 12 000 white rhinos and some 500 black rhinos.

Maggs says 21 poachers were killed in skirmishes with park rangers and the soldiers, and 78 were arrested.