

## **FAILURE TO PROSECUTE AND MIXED MESSAGES: How South Africa can single-handedly lose the second rhino war**

# **KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **BACKGROUND**

The WildAid report *Failure to Protect and Mixed Messages: How South Africa can single handedly lose the second rhino war* releases on Tuesday, 16 May 2017 at 18:00 GMT/20:00 SAST. Any publication of report findings is **strictly embargoed** until that time.

WildAid CEO Peter Knights and report author Susie Watts are available for interviews from South Africa between 16 and 18 May. South African journalists, please contact Susie Watts at [watts@wildaid.org](mailto:watts@wildaid.org) or +44 74 75 77 6831. International journalists, please contact Alona Rivord at [rivord@wildaid.org](mailto:rivord@wildaid.org) or +1 510 241 5617.

### **KEY REPORT FINDINGS**

#### Lack of prosecutions

- South Africa's rhino crisis has been "stimulated by organized crime" and "facilitated by corruption, procedural incompetence, and a failure to prosecute mid and higher level trade operators," according to the report.
- While numerous low level rhino poachers have been jailed, suspected middlemen and kingpins from the hunting and veterinary industries are routinely set free, even repeat offenders.
- High level court cases are plagued by postponements, dismissals, plea bargains, witness intimidation, and leniency, WildAid has found. Fines, when levied, are disproportionate to the potential illicit gains and provide insufficient deterrent effect.
- Intelligence generated from sophisticated investigations implicating South African police officers, as well as government officials from South Africa and Mozambique, has not been acted upon, the report says.

#### Legal horn trade

- The 2009 moratorium on domestic trade in rhino horn was overturned by South Africa's top court because correct procedures had not been followed.
- In the report, WildAid raises concerns over a new draft regulation that would allow the export of rhino horns. "South Africa's plan to export rhino horn is likely to worsen the situation for these animals," Watts concludes.
- It is WildAid's belief that South Africa is sending confusing messages to rhino horn consuming nations. The organization is worried about the country loosening controls on rhino horn because legal ivory trade caused an increase in demand that resulted in the illegal killing of 30,000 African elephants each year.

## Pseudo-hunting

- The report suggests that law enforcement officials failed to detect exploitation of the trophy hunting loophole for three years, then failed to act upon the fraud for another three years. By the time regulation came into effect, more than 200 white rhino trophies had been exported to Vietnam.
- Late last year, a Vietnamese hunter was allowed to shoot a white rhino with an outfit that has been implicated in “thousands of criminal charges.” The report argues that this “indicates that the South African authorities are not yet in full control of the hunting industry.”

## Demand reduction

- Watts writes that “evidence shows that demand-reduction messaging is having a significant impact on public opinion and consumer behavior” in Asia, and that “public consciousness has been reflected in political action at the highest level.”
- Rhino horn prices have fallen by half in Vietnam and China, market research shows, indicating a significant decline in demand.
- Less than one-quarter of people polled by WildAid in China and Vietnam still believe that rhino horn has any medicinal effects. The proportion of Vietnamese people surveyed who believe that rhino horn can cure cancer has dropped to fewer than 10% from nearly 35% in 2014.
- Next month, Vietnam is set to increase penalties for rhino crimes. “South Africa, however, has done little to advance demand reduction efforts in rhino horn and ivory consuming countries,” the report finds.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

WildAid recommends that South Africa takes the following immediate actions:

- Appoint a special court to deal with all rhino horn cases
- Prosecute vigorously middlemen and kingpins
- Reinstate the commercial rhino horn ban using the correct procedure
- Urge Mozambique to prosecute corrupt officials and those involved in poaching and smuggling
- Support demand reduction efforts, particularly in China and Vietnam