

Massacre of



With a blind eye being turned to the ivory trade, poaching in Africa continues unabated. This has dramatic consequences. Within seven years, a third of African elephants have been wiped out! Fondation Franz Weber (FFW) is fighting by all legal means against the slaughter of the gentle giants.

elephants for ivory.



ADAM CRUISE

Journalist & Author



According to a census on the entire continent in 2016, one third of African elephants were eradicated in just seven years. The main reasons for this tragedy are:

- Rampant poaching, further fuelled by an insatiable global greed for ivory that shows no signs of diminishing.
- Loss of habitat as people continue to invade areas of untouched nature.
- Trade in live elephants for zoos and circuses all over the world.
- The ongoing practice of uncontrolled trophy hunting.

CONCLUSION:

If nothing is done to fight hunting and to combat the displacement of these gentle giants, there is a risk that African elephants will become extinct in the wild in less than 10 years!

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Killed for ivory: an elephant shot by poachers in South Africa's Kruger National Park.



Stacked tusks from hundreds of animals in South Africa. Most elephants are killed because of the global demand for ivory.



The elephant census was a wake-up call for the international community. Governments took immediate action to stop the massacre. The USA, and shortly afterwards China, the two biggest ivory consumers, introduced an almost complete ban on domestic sales of ivory, while Kenya continued to destroy its national ivory stocks. Dozens of other countries followed suit. The USA additionally applied a ban on elephant trophy hunting in countries such as Zimbabwe and Tanzania. Botswana placed a ban on elephant hunting and other endangered wildlife within its country borders.

THE EU PREVENTS URGENTLY REQUIRED PROTECTION

On an international scale, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) is supposed to

guarantee the protection of African elephants.

In 1989 the entire African elephant population was placed on Appendix I of

APPROVED SALE OF IVORY STOCKS ENDANGERS ELEPHANTS

Elephants from most African countries are now listed by CITES in Appendix I. They therefore have the highest level of protection in the Convention. This means that elephants and elephant parts cannot be commercially traded, as the species is considered endangered. However, in 1997 and 2008, four southern African countries – Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe – convinced CITES that their elephant populations were growing, which consequently led to their downgrading to Appendix II. These four countries were allowed to sell their ivory stocks in a one-off major sales campaign: in 1999, when 60 tonnes went to Japan, and in 2008, when 102 tonnes of ivory were sold to China and Japan. These one-off sales swiftly generated huge demand for ivory, which in turn triggered a massacre of elephants across the whole continent. In spite of the devastating consequences, elephants in these countries remain listed in Appendix II to date.

the Convention – this equates to a full trade ban.

Since then, however, the protection status of African elephants has been repeatedly torpedoed (see box above).

Local markets with ivory products all over the globe, from New Zealand to Japan, fuel the killing of elephants in Africa.





When the 183 member states of the International Convention met at the end of 2016 for the Seventeenth Conference of the Parties (CoP17) in Johannesburg, South Africa, they missed yet another opportunity to place all African elephants under the full protection they so urgently need. This happened despite Botswana's sensational change of heart. It was one of the four countries previously responsible for the catastrophic sale of ivory stocks, yet Botswana's Minister for the Environment at the time, Tshekedi Khama, made a passionate appeal to the delegates who had gathered from all over the world, to increase the protection of all elephants in southern Africa by including them in Appendix I. His plea, however, fell on deaf ears. It was the 28 member-strong bloc of the European Union, of all the groups, that prevented this upgrading with its shocking «no» in the final vote. And Switzerland voted «no» on that day too! This fatal decision continued to leave the door open for southern African countries to profit from elephants.

THE WORST HAS HAPPENED

Even though the USA and China have already banned domestic sales of ivory, the trading of such is still permitted within the European Union. Equally, the EU remains the largest exporter of «antique» ivory. After China replaced Japan as the biggest consumer country in the region, exports from the EU now

mainly head to East Asia. With the ivory trade, both legal and illegal, showing no signs of stopping, elephant poaching meanwhile continues unabated. The illegal killing of elephants remains lucrative. And there are clear signs that this scourge, devastating the continent, is also escalating in southern Africa, which used to be considered an elephant stronghold.

Poaching elephants for their tusks has significantly increased in South Africa. After 14 years of no poaching, in 2014 it was reported that two elephants had been killed unlawfully. Since then this number has increased at an alarming rate. By 2015, ten times as many elephants had already been poached, and by 2016 this figure had doubled once again. In the past year, a total of 72 elephants were killed illegally for their tusks – a trend that could continue in 2019 and beyond if nothing is done to stop this right now!

According to the latest report by MIKE (the «Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants» programme), a sustained increase in poaching could lead to South Africa becoming a major gateway for illegal ivory exports to the East. However, this already seems to be the case now: several recent confiscations of ivory at Johannesburg international airport show that South Africa is becoming a significant hub for illegal ivory exports to Asia.

ELEPHANTS AS ANIMAL FEED

The situation in Botswana is even worse. The change of President in 2018 represented a radical change of course politically: the new President, Mokgweetsi Masisi, lifted the ban on trophy hunting imposed by his predecessor Ian Khama. Masisi even plans to kill hundreds of elephants to process the meat for animal feed.

BOTSWANA'S SHOCKING RENUNCIATION OF ELEPHANT PROTECTION

The President of Botswana, Mokgweetsi Masisi, recently held a conference in the city of Kasane in northern Botswana, attended by heads of state and Ministers for the Environment from Angola, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. At the conference, the President of Botswana gave the other heads of state stools made from elephant feet. This macabre «gift» is symbolic of the dreadful notion of economically motivated environmental protection, which endorses the use of elephants for trophy hunting or for the trade in ivory, skin and elephant meat.



Although it is illegal to sell whole tusks, this baby elephant tusk was openly on sale in a market in South Africa.

Three- to five-year-old baby elephants brutally separated from their mothers in the wild wait in small enclosures to be exported abroad, mostly to China.



According to Masisi there are currently too many elephants living in Botswana. However, a recently taken scientific aerial photograph of north Botswana – where the country's elephants are concentrated – shows that poaching has shot up and the total population of elephants living in Botswana has actually shrunk by 15%. The introduction of hunting and culling would further aggravate the situation.

After its promising turnaround in 2016, Botswana – like Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe before it – now shamelessly wants to go back to making a profit from elephants (find out more in our article on page 26). For the next CITES-Conference of the Parties (CoP18), the four countries are submit-

ting a joint proposal for another large-scale sale of their national ivory stocks. Zambia too is still trying to downgrade its elephant population to Appendix II, so that it can ease the regulations on the exportation of its ivory stocks and other elephant parts.

TRADE IN LIVE ELEPHANTS

As if the greed for ivory weren't enough, the demand for live elephants also poses a threat to the future of these animals. In recent years, Namibia and Zimbabwe have intensified their efforts to sell wild elephants.

As a result, in May 2019 six elephants were shipped from Namibia to the Democratic Republic of Congo – a country where elephant poaching is widespread.

According to the of Namibia this was a «trial run, to ensure that future exports run smoothly». Namibia has already exported elephants to zoos in Cuba and Mexico. Last year, the country tried to export elephants to a zoo in Dubai but was prevented from doing so due to a public outcry over it. In the end, Dubai purchased the animals from Zimbabwe – a country that has no scruples in selling dozens of elephants caught in the wild despite a spate of worldwide protests. In the last five years, Zimbabwe has sold over 100 baby elephants for a total of around 3 million Swiss Francs. Aside from the four elephants for Dubai, all of the other animals were sent to China: ironically, although the country has banned the sale of ivory, it has not banned the sale of live elephants.

HUNTING BY HELICOPTER: BABY ELEPHANTS SNATCHED FROM THEIR MOTHERS FOR ZOOS IN CHINA

In Zimbabwe, baby elephants are shot with arrows from a helicopter, while their mothers are driven away by a nose-diving helicopter. Poachers on the ground rapidly approach in tractors and trucks to bundle the unconscious calves into trailers before the enraged mothers return. The young elephants are then crammed into a tiny enclosure, where they are prepared for the flight, to then be shipped to different zoos and safari parks all over China. Many of the young elephants are still dependent on their mothers' milk. Most of them suffer from hunger and become ill; some even die.



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An elephant poacher's tools and weapons.

Fondation Franz Weber (FFW) has it on good authority that another consignment of 35 baby elephants has been penned up in Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park, ready to be flown to China.

DOMESTIC IVORY MARKET ON THE EDGE OF THE LAW

The trade in raw ivory is banned in South Africa. In the European Union, however, trading «antique» ivory is

permitted. Dealers in South Africa, who allegedly want to sell antique ivory items, must be registered in order to do so. Buyers also need permission to purchase and own ivory.

This legal ivory market in South Africa is flourishing. But is everything above board? To answer this question, FFW took a look at the South African market in February and March 2019. Our investigation found that none of the dealers that FFW researched had any of the documents necessary for selling. Most dealers did not even know about this requirement. All transactions thus took place without any documentation regarding the age and origin of the items. The buyers and the sellers had none of the relevant permits. This means that ivory that has actually come

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Carved ivory is available in shops and markets all over Zimbabwe and South Africa.



from recently killed elephants can be readily offered and sold as «antique».

Our investigation shows that most ivory is bought from antiques wholesalers that, in general, are from Nigeria or Zimbabwe. Some ivory can even be bought online, without any documents or authorisation. In short, anyone could buy ivory in small amounts and take it abroad. There is virtually no risk of being caught. Judging by the extensive displays in many shops in South Africa, business is booming, with tourists from Asia and Europe making up most of the buyers.

A Dutch buyer openly admitted to FFW that: «The South African customs authority has no idea of the regulations and would never be able to spot the difference between bones and ivory.» He told us that for 30 years he had been taking items to Europe to resell and had never encountered any problems.

While there is still no market in Botswana at the moment, Namibia and Zimbabwe have flourishing domestic ivory markets.

Both countries can sell carved or processed ivory within their respective country borders. Only raw tusks cannot be sold. Unlike South Africa, these carvings do not have to be «antique» and can, entirely legally, come from recently killed elephants. Given that the Chinese invest massively in both countries, there is concern that ivory is being illegally laundered in the guise of official trading, and that ivory from poaching will reach the Far East via South Africa.

ELEPHANTS URGENTLY NEED OUR HELP

Despite these unsettling developments over the last three years, Fondation Franz Weber continues working tirelessly to protect African elephants from extinction. In view of the shameless lobbying by southern African countries to encourage CITES to once again weaken trade restrictions on elephants, protecting these animals is a matter of absolute urgency. The relevant decisions about the future of African elephants should have been made during the Conference of the Parties (CoP18) in Sri Lanka in May 2019. However, after terrorist attacks in April in Colombo, CoP18 was pushed

back to August. As a result, southern African countries have gained more time to strengthen their position.

Nevertheless, the delay has also given FFW and its partner organisations time to counter the demands of these countries. Fondation Franz Weber provides technical assistance and advice to the African Elephant Coalition (AEC) – a strong group of 30 African countries representing two thirds of African elephant populations. This group is the true voice of elephants in Africa: it calls for the full protection of all African elephants by including them in Appendix I, as well as the reduction and destruction of national ivory stocks, the closing down of the domestic markets and an end to the trade in live elephants.

However, the AEC desperately needs help. FFW is therefore making an urgent appeal: only a global public protest against the organised mass slaughtering of elephants will convince the contracting parties of CITES that Africa's gentle giants are only in with a chance of survival if they receive full protection, no ifs or buts.



Fondation Franz Weber battles tirelessly for elephants in Africa and demands a complete ban on the ivory trade.

