



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,
FORESTRY AND TOURISM



PRESS RELEASE

18 June 2024

MINISTERIAL REACTION TO THE RECENT FATAL ELEPHANT ATTACKS

The Ministry has noted regrettably and with sadness of two separate fatal attacks by elephants in the country on 17 June 2024.

One incident involved a prominent and respected professional hunter who was unfortunately fatally attacked by an elephant during a hunt. The Ministry declared the elephant a problem causing animal, and a trophy hunting permit was issued to that effect. This hunt was meant to relieve communities in the area whose livelihoods have been affected by damages caused by elephants on their properties. The deceased identified as Gert Van der Walt was known for his professionalism in observing the code of conduct for hunters in the country. He was always available when the Ministry needed him, especially in resolving human wildlife conflict incidences.

We want to appeal to members of the public to respect his memory keeping in mind his grieving family. We have taken note of very insensitive comments being made following the incident. We also want to clarify that sentiments that this was a secret hunting operation are false, unfounded and misleading. Gert van Der Walt had hunting contracts with conservancies in the Kunene Omusati and Oshikoto regions. Despite this, he was always available to provide assistance in areas that are outside his contract whenever requested by the Ministry. The funds that were to be generated from this hunt would be paid to the conservancy/community to help in recuperating the damages caused by elephants in the affected areas. We should as a country appreciate the contribution that Mr Van der Walt and the entire hunting fraternity are making not only in conservation but also in the wellbeing of our people.

The second incident took place in the Zambezi region involving a Ministry staff member employed at the Ngoma Forest Research Station. The Deceased was identified as 45-year-old Albert Kawayile who was fatally attacked by an elephant on his way to work. He was discovered by a passerby still alive and only passed on later. Mr Kawayile was a very resourceful person in the Ngoma Forest Research Station and the Ministry in general. His loss is gravely felt and regretted.



We wish to extend heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families of both the late Gert Van der Walt and Albert Kawayile. Collectively, they play a crucial role in conserving our natural resources. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

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