

# Media Statement



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**TO: ALL MEDIA**

**DATE: 10 OCTOBER 2019**

**RE: RHINO POACHERS SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS DIRECT IMPRISONMENT**

The Lephalale Regional Court, sentenced Adam Mandla Sithole, Sam Ivogercilio Mujovu and Respect Reason Muthonzi

on Monday, 07 October to 15 years imprisonment. The trio was found guilty on the following counts: contravening the provisions of Section 31 (1)(a) of the Limpopo Environmental Management Act 7 of 2007 (LEMA); selling or in any manner give possession of a firearm or ammunition to a person who is not allowed to possess it (contravening the provisions of Section 120 (10) (a) of the firearm control Act 60 of 2000); possession of a prohibited firearm of which the serial number was removed and lastly, the count of attempted murder.

The accused will effectively serve 15 years in prison after the judge ordered some of the sentences to run concurrently.

During trial, the court heard that on 18 November 2014, unknown tracks were found on a game farm in Lephalale. Police were summoned to the scene to trace the tracks. As the police were closing them in, the accused fired shots at the police who also returned fire. During the exchange, one of the accused was struck and all three accused were arrested. Firearms, ammunition and an axe were recovered from the accused.

In court, one of the accused admitted that they were on the farm hunting for Rhinos.

The court found them guilty as charged and sentenced them to 10 years on each of the environmental crimes and a further 15 years imprisonment for attempted murder. The sentences were ordered to run concurrently with the count of attempted murder. All accused were declared unfit to possess firearm.

The DPP Limpopo, Advocate Ivy Thenga, welcomes the successful prosecution and the appropriate sentence in this case and is hopeful that it will have a positive impact in addressing crimes against rhinos and other endangered species in this country.

**Mashudu Malabi-Dzhang**

**Regional Spokesperson**

**DPP Limpopo**