

IFAW welcomes Malawi's burning of 781 elephant tusks

Malawi has burned 2.6 tons of illicit ivory, comprising 781 elephant tusks. The ivory had been seized from ivory traffickers in Mzuzu in 2013, the capital of Malawi's Northern Region.



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In sentencing the traffickers in July 2015 the High Court ordered the ivory to be burned.

Malawi has been identified as a key transit route and distribution hub for illicit ivory, due mostly to its location between some of the countries worst hit by poaching - Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia. The small land-locked Southern African country has been implicated in some of the world's biggest ever ivory seizures, including the single largest seizure on record - 6.5 tons in Singapore in 2002 of ivory shipped from Lilongwe, Malawi's capital.

The ivory burned in Mzuzu included ivory from Tanzania and Mozambique seized while in transit from Tanzania to Malawi's capital of Lilongwe.

Powerful message

"Wildlife crime is among the most serious, dangerous and damaging of international crimes. Putting ivory beyond use sends a powerful message to the criminals behind the illegal wildlife trade that their activities will not be tolerated," said Jason Bell, director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

“Malawi is being exploited as a conduit by wildlife traffickers as can be seen from this very case. Today’s event sends a clear message - do not target our nation to traffic illicit goods, because we shall turn it to ashes. And Malawi’s stance is clear, that ivory is not for trade,” said Brighton Kumchedwa, Malawi’s director of National Parks & Wildlife.

Most illegal ivory is destined for Asia, in particular China, where it has soared in value as an investment vehicle and is coveted as 'white gold'. Availability of legal ivory in China purchased from the stockpile sale in southern Africa in 2008 has, in turn, boosted demand and encouraged illegal ivory trade and the poaching of elephant to meet market needs.

Recently, Malawi has made major strides in its work to end wildlife crime, including updates to legislation that ensure stiffer sentences for convicted wildlife criminals, training of staff and the introduction of ivory detection dogs, proactive wildlife investigations and wildlife crime interception management.

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