



September 6, 2018

His Excellency Mokgweetsi Masisi
President of the Republic of Botswana

Via e-mail: gpitso@gov.bw

Urgent appeal

Your Excellency,

For years, Botswana's anti-poaching unit and its mandate to protect wildlife garnered the admiration and acclaim of the world. Now, on behalf of PETA and our more than 6.5 million members and supporters around the world, I urge you to take immediate steps to *rearm your country's anti-poaching unit* so that elephants and other animals can be protected as they once were. Botswana was applauded for its sanctuary work, but as you are undoubtedly aware, there is worldwide outrage at the news that nearly 90 elephants and five white rhinoceroses have been slaughtered in recent months because the program has been decommissioned.

Of course, the lives of unarmed patrol officers are at risk, as they can no longer be expected to cope with heavily armed and determined poachers. Eliminating the unit's ability to combat crimes against wildlife has left a vacuum that poachers are filling rapidly, as the hideous carnage of just these few short months have shown.

The international community is appalled by this and by hearing that Botswana's parliament is considering weakening the ban on trophy hunts. Tourists will change plans to visit, especially after hearing reports that armed poachers have moved into the Okavango Delta. One need only recall the blow to Zimbabwe's tourism after Cecil the lion was killed.

Your country's staunch position once served as a model for others to follow. We urge you to uphold Botswana's animal-protection legacy and remedy this critical situation by reinstating your anti-poaching unit right away. The world is watching, waiting, and hoping you will do the right thing.

Respectfully yours,

Ingrid Newkirk
President
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

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