

Stampersgat (Netherlands), 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2023

Subject: plea for intervention in case Wildforlife Rehabilitation Centre vs North-West Province

Dear Honourable Minister Creecy,

In 2021 your Ministry announced they wanted to stop the captive breeding and exploitation of lions in South Africa. A bold step for which we applaud you. The waiting is now on a phase-out plan of this industry and a plan for the thousands of captive bred lions on the many farms which are mostly spread in the North-West Province and Free State. There are two captive bred lions which have had media attention in the past and have given an individual face to these thousands of lions. They are called Mufasa and Soraya.

Mufasa was confiscated from people keeping him without a permit at the end of 2015 and he was handed over to the Wildforlife Rehabilitation Centre in the North-West Province. It was understood that he would go to a sanctuary at the end of legal proceedings against the previous owners. At the time, he was teamed up with a lioness named Soraya, which also came from the captive breeding industry, and both lions have formed a very close bond.

At the end of legal proceedings in 2017, the Wildforlife Rehabilitation Centre was informed by the North West Department of Economic development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (previously known as READ and further on referred to as The NW Department) that Soraya could move to a sanctuary but that Mufasa would be sold on auction. This would leave Mufasa, a white lion, open to the possibility of entering the captive lion hunting/canned hunting industry. Wildforlife Rehabilitation Centre, represented by Tjitske Schouwstra, initiated legal proceedings to prevent that Mufasa was handed over to the NW Department and instead, to have these lions moved to a NSPCA registered sanctuary. To this date, years later, Mrs Tjitske Schouwstra and the NW Department, are stuck in legal proceedings which could take up many more years to come.

The story is long so we don't want to mention this all in this letter but it can be read in attached document. What it comes down to is that the NW Department is not willing to give permission for both lions to leave the NW Province and go to a NSPCA registered sanctuary, although there is a valid import permit for a NSPCA approved facility in Limpopo who wants to take the two lions in their care permanently. End of 2022, an agreement was made between the two parties that the lions would be moved under a governmental permit, meaning the status quo would remain as it is, and that Mufasa and Soraya could be temporarily moved to this NSPCA registered sanctuary while legal proceedings carried on. The NW department applied for import permits from the government of Limpopo, who would, in request of the North West department, keep a regular eye on the lions. This permit was approved in early January this year, but on the 10th of March 2023, Mrs Tjitske Schouwstra was informed that the NW Department refused to let the lions leave the North-West Province until the appeal has been heard.

We are puzzled....

As we understand, the NW Department wants to propose wildlife facilities in the NW Province in which they want to accommodate these two lions. As you know, there are major differences between these wildlife facilities and NSPCA registered sanctuaries. There are no NSPCA registered lion sanctuaries in the North-West Province.

In their briefing from 12th March 2019 on the implementation of the Colloquium on captive lion breeding, the portfolio committee on Environmental affairs published the results of inspections conducted on breeding facilities in four Provinces. In the North West Province, 20 of the 74 facilities inspected were found to be in non-compliance with TOPS regulations. Although some of these facilities were brought back into compliance, some only had their permits reinstated and three of the facilities were sold to the NW Provincial Government. To us this gives a very odd feeling. With the proposal of the DFFE to shut down the captive lion breeding industry and canned hunting, why does the North-West Government invests in lion breeding farms when it is supposed to pursue to end the activity as per Parliamentary resolution?

Under its Roma Nna Legacy foundation program, the NW Department mentions annual wildlife auctions as a revenue generating income stream of which proceeds would contribute to the legacy fund. The catalogue for the 2022 Mebala ya rona Biodiversity hunting and culling auction shows a trophy hunt for a female lioness on pg. 10, as well as trophy hunts for a lioness and a male lion on pg. 27 and a trophy hunt for a male lion on pg. 28. Similar packages were available in the catalogues for 2017 to 2019 whereas the catalogue for 2019 also contained the auction of two cubs.

With all mentioned above, we have no trust in the NW Department's willingness to let the two lions be moved to the NSPCA registered sanctuary in Limpopo, who is eager to take them. We think it's very well possible these two lions, when handed over to the North West Authorities, could end up in a catalogue for trophy hunting. Or end up in a non-registered NSPCA sanctuary. We really don't understand all of this. There is a NSPCA registered sanctuary who is willing to take these two lions. Instead the NW Department seems to settle for legal proceedings which might take up years. This is certainly not in the best interest of the two lions but we also think it's difficult to explain to the citizens of South Africa who factually pay for the legal costs of all these unnecessary legal proceedings.

It sincerely makes us wonder why the North-West Provincial government is handling this subject of the two lions in the way they do. We don't understand why so much effort and money is spent on these two lions whilst there is a NSPCA registered sanctuary available for them. To be honest; we get a very awkward feeling with this and we think we will not be the only ones not understanding it. We also think this policy is in contradiction with your efforts to stop the captive breeding and exploitation of lions in your country. It is certainly not helping to restore the good name of South Africa.

We therefore urgently plea with you to intervene in this case, so that these two lions can go to the NSPCA registered sanctuary which has been available for them for years. It would at least erase any doubts whether South Africa is really willing to stop the exploitation of lions in her country.

We hope to hear from you,

Yours sincerely,

Simone Eckhardt, CEO stichting SPOTS (Netherlands)  
LP van Mallandstraat 46, 4754 AP Stampersgat, Netherlands  
Tel: 0031 (0)6 40947232  
Mail: [info@stichtingspots.nl](mailto:info@stichtingspots.nl)



# Plea for intervention



## Co-signed by

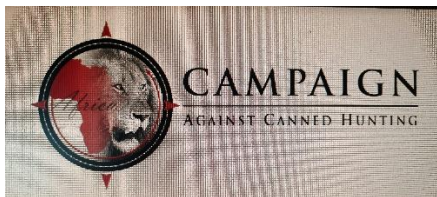
Chris Mercer, Director Campaign Against Canned Hunting (South Africa)



Faye Peeters, Director Campaign Against Canned Hunting (Germany)



Julie Lasne, Director Campaign Against Canned Hunting (France)



CJ and Luis Munoz, Directors Chezlui4lions (Spain)

