

# BOTSWANA: FIVE-YEAR BAN ON ELEPHANT HUNTING IS OVER



After a five-year ban, elephant hunting resumed in Botswana. The country, home to Africa's largest elephant population, lifted its moratorium on May 22nd. A measure to satisfy farmers, for whom the growing population of pachyderms had become a problem, to the point of having a negative effect on their income.

A local study revealed that "the human-elephant conflict has increased in number and intensity and is increasingly affecting people's livelihoods," said the country's environmental minister. He promised that elephant hunting would resume "in an orderly and ethical manner".

Five months before the next presidential election, ruling party MPs were pushing to lift the ban on hunting, saying elephant populations had become unmanageable in some areas. On the other hand, **wildlife defenders believe that the return of hunting risks ruining Botswana's tourism sector, a pillar of the country's economy.**

Commercial hunting of endangered wildlife, including elephants, was banned in 2014 by former Botswana President Ian Khama. His successor, Mokgweetsi Masisi, who came to power last year, had distanced himself from the policy of protecting wildlife at all costs.

Botswana has by far the largest elephant population in Africa, with 135 thousand individuals recorded in 2015, who move freely and many of whom pass through Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Some experts estimate that their number could now reach 160 thousand. This would represent multiplication by three in thirty years.

**Poaching is the main threat for pachyderms, whose tusks are sold for gold in Asia,** especially to serve the needs of traditional medicine. In the summer of 2018, the NGO Elephants Without Borders alerted to a wave of poaching in Botswana and identified at least 90 elephant carcasses between July and September.

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