

HUNTING AND WILDLIFE ASSOCIATIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA (HAWASA)

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Open Letter: To Beeld Editor
Barnard Beukman
Per Email: barnard.beukman@beeld.com
Cc: Deon van Dyk
Per Email: deon.vandyk@beeld.com

Dear Sir

Article by Elize Tempelhoff – Beeld – My Wêreld, 17 Sept 2020 “Creecy sê ja vir trofeejag”

Disappointment is an understatement after reading the widely shared article in the Beeld – My Wêreld section, on 17 Sept by Elize Tempelhoff titled “Creecy sê ja vir trofeejag”. In particular, we are disappointed following an earlier set of correspondence with your Deon van Dyk in June of this year, where we’d questioned the editorial position of Beeld regarding the hunting and wildlife sector, also catalysed by articles you published by Elize Tempelhoff. In this exchange you took great pains to say that you and Beeld are not anti-hunting, and that the article that concerned us was but an isolated event. Of course, we realise that news must be covered, but knowing our existing concerns around Tempelhoff’s biased reporting and in particular knowing that the hunting, wildlife and outdoor/farming sector are a very specific and large portion of your publication readership’s heritage, passion and professions, one would at least of expected a responsible editor to alert the journalist to the fact that she had not sought a single opinion from “the other side” of the topic being covered.

Notwithstanding your reassurances in the email you wrote to Deon van Dyk in June (copy attached) it is patently clear that you prefer one-sided and provocative journalism on this subject and are quite happy to repeatedly allow the voices of radical animal-rightism to dominate this subject, portrayed as conservationists. The facts themselves are of course the least of all your concerns. This is clearly a culture within Media 24 generally, but is most concerning given the demographic that Beeld serves, which is largely the same one that our various organisations represent.

In particular, you have allowed your platform to be used to try embarrass and thereby bully the honourable Minister of Environmental Affairs, Forestry and Fisheries. You have not insisted that an article headlining her name be responsibly and thoroughly covered and that balanced reporting prevails. This has allowed factual errors and negative inuendo to seep through the message. This Minister has a massive and complicated portfolio on which hinges the wellbeing and livelihoods of millions of South Africans. Almost exclusively rural, many at the subsistence level and an area needing growth, development and transformation, this Minister has been singularly outstanding during her short tenure and in particular given the devastation that the Covid pandemic and its associated lockdowns has wreaked particularly on this sector. She has been forced to swing the bulk of here severely curtailed budget into holding together the SAN-Parks structure thereby doing her best to save our national parks. She has not “opened some poisonous chalice” in here answer to the parliamentary question, by herself actually ordaining the killing of animals, but is in fact overseeing an a

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sound, transparent and responsible manner a policy and practice long established and well proven to be the correct one when it comes to balanced, responsible conservation strategy. South Africa has, through a world-leading and dynamic blend of public/private wildlife stewardship grown all animal numbers consistently now for more than 6 decades, and has increased private land under wildlife to the point where it now exceeds state protected areas threefold at least.

This Minister has taken over the reigns of leadership at a pivotal time, when organisations aplenty disguised as conservation focussed, but in fact harbouring radical animal-rightism dogma, are robbing not just the people who live with and from responsible, managed use of natural living resources, but also overstepping the true, traditional conservation organisations that have actual programs to preserve and increase suitable habitat for threatened species and by emotionalising high-profile issues such as so called trophy-hunting, steer the naïve public's donor funding from conservation to dogmatic radical sensationalism. Ban Animal Trading (BAT) and the Elizabeth Margret Steyn Foundation (EMS) are prime examples of this. Your Tempelhoff consistently gives airtime to their views yet never seems to report on the more than 20 million hectares of private wildlife estate, supporting massive biodiversity, many millions of livelihoods and contributing to reduced carbon-footprint productive land-use by choosing wildlife farming over conventional agriculture. Trophy-hunting is portrayed as an evil taboo, as these organisations know that it is easy to deceive an unaware public that somehow a higher paying hunter, who has travelled from elsewhere to enjoy and contribute to our conservation success, is in fact some form of evil and destructive curse hell-bent on wiping out nature. Your allowing of the platform to Tempelhoff and her axis feeds this narrative constantly. In fact, although the vast majority of animals hunted annually in South Africa is by locals and mostly with the personal use of the meat being core to their activity, the tiny fraction of animals hunted by foreign visitors brings vast premiums in revenue which not only preserve these more flamboyant species, but greatly subsidise the entire wildlife sector giving sustainability to the entire system. To ban trophy hunting as an aspect of the South African wildlife sector because of the mistaken belief that the resource base is finite and declining, would be akin to banning foreign tourists from our national parks and winelands because they represent a higher carbon-footprint due to the long-haul flights needed to get them here!

Mr Beukman, we suggest you apply your mind and enlighten yourself better to the matters covered by Tempelhoff which you continue to publish without due consideration. We would be happy to attend a meeting with you should you wish to delve deeper into some of the complexities of the South African Wildlife Sector, and its potential for social and economic growth and transformation. You may be surprised to realise what percentage of not just your readership, but many of your advertisers are deeply engaged in and passionate about our wildlife heritage, biodiversity economy and the sustainable use principle. We look forward to your positive response hereto and at the very least believe you and your publication owe the honourable Minister Creecy a sincere apology for allowing her to be played like a political football.

Yours faithfully



Stephen Palos - Chairperson: HAWASA

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