May 18, 2025

Mrs. Raya Shurki, General Director of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority

Cc: Hon. Minister of Environmental Protection Mrs. Idit Silman
Mr. Ori Linial,
Head of Wildlife Trade, Captivity Permits & Maintenance
Supervision Unit, Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA)

Dear Mrs. Raya Shurki,

Subject: Support for 5 lion cubs transfer to sanctuary

I write to you this letter with a sense of urgency. I know at this time of war that the issue of protecting and deciding the future of 5 lion cubs confiscated by your rangers from traffickers would seem minute, but to me this is deeply distressing as lions in Africa are becoming increasingly endangered.

I have been involved in mitigating and finding practical solutions to the global illegal wildlife trade and the Jane Goodall Institute has a committee looking into this. We have presented our findings to Interpol, IUCN, CITES and UNDOC on its threats to human health, wildlife and ecosystem survival.

I hope INPA will back the proposed legislation bill by head of the animal rights lobby in the Knesset Parliament MK Yasmin Sacks Fridman seeking to criminalize wildlife trafficking at the prosecution level of money laundering. Indeed, research has shown that wildlife trafficking is closely linked to the same criminal syndicates involved in weapons for terrorism, human trafficking and drugs along specific trading routes. This is just one aspect of how not prosecuting wildlife organized crime becomes a national security risk. Transporting smuggled weapons into Israel via heavy duty drones from Jordan and Egypt was exactly the way that these lion cubs arrived.

In the case of these 5 lion cubs I would be grateful to hear from you on any DNA testing you collect and analyse. Critically endangered lion sub-populations and sub-species identification via endemic genetic markers can inform us as to where their parents were hunted in the wild (such as horn of Africa) or if they came from the terrible 'blood lion' breeding farms. Putting these pieces together is key in trying to solve the problem of the epidemic of wildlife trafficking.

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Lastly, I would urge you and INPA to approve transferring these 5 lion cubs to Simbonga, South Africa's ecological rehabilitation sanctuary. My colleagues (and friends) Gina Kruger Cowne and Cher are co-founders of Free the Wild charity, have rescued many malnourished, neglected and injured wild animals transferring them to sanctuaries. They have experience in this field and should be the ones overseeing this endeavour so these lions will grow up in the African Savannah where they belong. A life in a zoo is no life for large predators who need the wilderness.

I am asking for Dr Nicole Benjamin-Fink, founder of Conservation Beyond Borders NGO be the person who will coordinate the lions' transfer from Israel to the sanctuary in South Africa. She has a good record and the talents to accomplish this.

I look forward to receiving news of INPA approval.

Praying for peace,

Yours sincerely,

Jane Goodall

Jane Goodall Ph.D., DBE
Founder – the Jane Goodall Institute &
UN Messenger of Peace

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