

Hong Kong customs seize over a tonne of smuggled ivory

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Seized pieces of unpolished tusks are displayed during a press conference by customs officials in Hong Kong. Hong Kong customs officers have seized more than a tonne of unprocessed elephant tusks worth around \$1.37 million on the Chinese ivory market, officials said.

Hong Kong customs officers have seized more than a tonne of unprocessed elephant tusks worth around \$1.37 million on the Chinese ivory market, officials said on Friday.

Forty five bags carrying 569 pieces of unpolished tusks weighing about 1,330 kilogrammes (2,932 pounds) were seized on Thursday in a container from Tanzania, officials said.

"These ivory tusks were concealed with other normal goods. There were 400 bags of [sunflower seeds](#) used as concealment," Group Head of Ports and Maritime Command Wong Sui-hang said.

The tusks left Tanzania by ship and were transferred to another vessel in Dubai before making the journey to Hong Kong, Wong said.

Anyone found guilty of importing ivory into Hong Kong faces up to two years in jail and a fine of HK\$5 million (\$645,000). Even so, the city remains a major trading centre for processed ivory goods such as carvings and jewellery.

Customs officers made the southern Chinese city's largest ivory seizure in October when they intercepted almost four tonnes worth about \$3.4 million, hidden in shipments from Kenya and Tanzania.

The 1,209 pieces of raw ivory tusk and a small number of ivory [ornaments](#) were discovered in two containers masked "plastic scrap" and "beans".

The [international trade](#) in ivory, with rare exceptions, has been outlawed since 1989 after [African elephant](#) populations dropped from the millions in the mid-20th century to some 600,000 by the end of the 1980s.

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