

# Rescued lions roar into South Africa after flight from Peru

May 1 2016

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An African lion in a cage arrives at the OR Tambo International Airport on April 30, 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa

The roaring of 33 lions rescued from circuses in Peru and Colombia echoed through Johannesburg's international airport Saturday after they arrived in their ancestral homeland for the first time.

The lions appeared healthy but a little distressed by the long journey, Jan

Creamer, the president of Animal Defenders International (ADI), an animal rights charity that organised the flight, told reporters.

"They have lived a life of absolute hell. They've been beaten and they've been starved. They've been deprived of everything that makes life worth living for a [lion](#).

"I believe we have brought them back to paradise, where they belong," she said.

After flying for more than 15 hours the lions were loaded onto two huge trucks which were due to drive through the night to their new home at the 5,000 hectare Emoya Big Cat Sanctuary in the north of the country.

At around dawn they will be freed into large natural enclosures in the African bush.

"The lion habitats will be steadily expanded over the coming months as the lions become familiar with their new life and are introduced to each other," said ADI.

The lions were bred in captivity and many have broken teeth or other ailments—one is almost blind, another has lost an eye and most had their claws removed—which would make it impossible for them to survive in the wild.

## Rescued lions head for a new life

The big cats suffered abuse in Peruvian and Colombian circuses



▶ Many of the animals suffer from **malnutrition, disease** and other health problems

**24** lions  
from Peru

**9** from Colombia

After a short stay in Johannesburg, they will be sent to the **Emoya Big Cat Sanctuary**



▶ **Cost of the operation :**  
10,000 dollars per lion

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Graphic, including map, illustrating how lions from circuses in Peru and Colombia are to be released into a game park in South Africa

The lions were freed with the assistance of the authorities after the use of wild animals in circuses was outlawed in Peru and Colombia.

Twenty-four lions rescued in Peru were driven from their temporary rescue center to Lima airport to be picked up by a cargo plane that brought another nine over from Colombia before taking off for Africa.

"The lions will be in their natural habitat for the first time in their lives," Creamer said. "They should fit right into that habitat. It's the best environment for them."

At their new home, "the lions will enjoy large natural enclosures situated

in pristine African bush, complete with drinking pools, platforms and toys," ADI said.

The sanctuary is already home to six rescued lions and two tigers.

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