

Villagers in Niger 'massacre' 27 hippos

July 13 2017



Frustrated farmers killed at least 27 hippos after the beasts damaged their livelihood in western Niger, prompting official intervention

At least 27 hippos have been slaughtered in a touristy zone in western Niger by villagers who blame them for destroying crops and harming livestock, local authorities said on Thursday.

The "massacre ...started in March and then assumed dramatic proportions" mainly in island settlements on the Niger river, the prefect of the Ayorou region, Jando Rhichi Algaher, told AFP.

Large numbers of hippos and several [bird species](#) have made Ayorou, about 200 kilometres (125 miles) from the capital Niamey, a popular place for tourists.

Patrols by troops "have helped slow the slaughter", Algaher said.

"The locals have killed a large number of hippopotamuses, although this species is protected," Environment Minister Almoustapha Garba said on state radio.

"We urged the local people not to break the law and took note of their concerns," said Garba, who promised to pay compensation to the affected farmers.

Tension is high in Ayorou after the arrest of about ten people suspected of killing a hippopotamus. Some of the suspects have been freed, Algaher said.

In May, local tribal chiefs issued warnings about hippos, saying they were ravaging crops and threatening boats on the Niger river.

In 2014, 12 schoolchildren aged between 12 and 13 were killed when a [hippo](#) attacked their boat on the Niger at Libore, a village near Niamey.

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Citation: Villagers in Niger 'massacre' 27 hippos (2017, July 13) retrieved 28 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-07-villagers-niger-massacre-hippos.html>

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