

Protests at Joburg zoo over widowed elephant

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African elephants, the largest land animals on Earth, sometimes live into their seventies. They are famously social animals, living in complex communities and forging relationships that can last a lifetime

Johannesburg Zoo is under mounting pressure to send a lonely elephant to an animal sanctuary after her male companion died last month.

Protestors dressed in elephant costumes have been demonstrated at the

zoo entrance, while online petitions have garnered over 100,000 signatories, clamouring for 39-year-old Lammie to start a new life in the company of other elephants.

She is the only elephant remaining at the zoo after Kinkel, her companion of 35 years, died from a long-standing colic problem.

The zoo said it was standing firm in the face of the campaign.

"Lammie, after many weeks of being monitored, has been found to be coping extremely well and will therefore remain at the Joburg Zoo," spokeswoman Jenny Moodley told AFP.

"Please allow us the latitude to continue to monitor her coping abilities stemming from the recent loss of her partner."

Elephants are known for their intelligence and social nature. Animal rights activists have called for her to be moved to a sanctuary where she can roam free with other elephants.

"Lammie being kept in isolation in captivity is an immediate threat to her health and physiological, social and mental well-being," Audrey Delsink, director at Humane Society International (HSI) Africa, told AFP.

Martie Roussouw, of the National Council of Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA), said they were disappointed at the zoo's decision.

"An accredited sanctuary would provide more freedom and a more natural existence, as well as companionship in a managed and protected environment," he said.

The zoo declined to comment whether it planned to bring in another elephant.

The number of [elephants](#) in Africa has fallen by around 111,000 to 415,000 in the past decade, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

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