

Gabon seizes haul of 'sacred' wood: NGO

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Gabon, 80-percent covered by forest, has banned exploitation of the 'sacred' kevazingo wood

Customs officers have seized a major haul of kevazingo, a precious wood whose exploitation is banned in Gabon where it is considered sacred, a report said Wednesday.

About 1,000 cubic metres of the rare hardwood—or 30 large container-loads—were confiscated along with other wood in a warehouse at the Owendo timber port on the Libreville peninsula last week, campaigning group Conservation Justice reported.

The head of the Chinese business that owned the warehouse and two other employees had been arrested and remained in custody, the group said.

Timber from kevazingo trees, which take many years to mature, is highly valued in Asia and fetches very [high prices](#).

Depending on quality kevazingo, also known as bubinga, can fetch up to 1.2 million CFA francs (1,800 euros, \$2,000) per cubic metre, say specialists.

It is listed as under threat by CITES, the international convention covering endangered animals and flora.

Gabon banned its exploitation in March last year as illegal felling reached alarming proportions. Forest dwellers in equatorial Africa consider it sacred.

Gabon's, 80-percent covered by forest, is known for its rich biodiversity.

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