



MEDIA RELEASE

TOWARDS FREEDOM AT LAST FOR ZOO ELEPHANT CHARLEY IN SOUTH AFRICA

[Johannesburg: 08 August 2024]: The vision of the [Pro Elephant Network](#) (PREN) is a future in which all elephants can thrive in freedom and dignity in protected natural habitats as part of naturally functioning and evolving ecosystems. Our mission is to stop the capture and exploitation of elephants by humans and to advocate for the release of captive-held elephants back into natural spaces. Where freedom and reintegration back into wild areas is not possible PREN seeks the best ethical solutions in the most natural surroundings possible. The acceptability and viability of these ethics and conditions are to be evaluated relative to what the individual elephant would be able to experience in the wild.

On the 29th July 2022, the South African Government made a ground breaking decision to pursue options for the [retirement of Charley](#), a bull elephant, from the zoo in Pretoria to a suitable wildlife sanctuary or a similar setting. This progressive decision was based on the best scientific and ethological evidence provided to them by elephant experts and civil society.

Offering all South Africans a fair and equitable opportunity, on the 17th of May 2023, interested parties were requested to publicly submit proposals in response to an advertised call for an [Expression of Interest](#) to find a suitable retirement home. The [EMS Foundation](#) and [Shambala Private Game Reserve](#) submitted an extensive response which was accepted in March 2024.

Following Charlie's [comprehensive](#) expert behavioural and medical assessments it has been noted that due to his advanced age and the physical complications associated with being in captivity for over forty years that the preparation for his relocation, the relocation itself and his rehabilitation to a natural secured environment is not without risk. In March 2024 the government [confirmed](#) their acceptance of the generous offer EMS Foundation and Shambala Private Game Reserve made to Charlie.

In preparation for Charlie's relocation from the zoo, the EMS Foundation and Shambala are partnering with a highly qualified and experienced team of international elephant trainers with oversight from South African and international veterinarians. Charlie is receiving excellent round the clock care during his preparation for his evacuation from the zoo, with ground support from international and South African organisations. South African wildlife translocation specialists will transfer Charlie with his team, to a state-of-the-art rehabilitation boma that has been designed and built to cater for his every need as he is gently transitioned into a more natural, protected environment. As this project progresses more specialists will be invited to take part in assisting with, and recording his progress.

PREN has, since 2020, played a significant role in the negotiation process for the release of Charley from the zoo, furthermore, distinguished expert members of PREN have attended the zoo and compiled important reports which were submitted to the South African government. This important South African and international project is supported by the elephant experts from the Pro Elephant Network.

- Owais Awan Advocate High Court, Islamabad
Suparna Baksi-Ganguly President and Co-Founder, Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation Center - India
- Dr Brett Bard Veterinarian - South Africa
- Dr Jessica Bell Rizzolo Postdoctoral Researcher, the Conservation Criminology Lab, Dep of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University - USA
- Janey Clegg Committee Member, SPCA Mutare - Zimbabwe

- Lenin Chisaira Founder, Advocates 4 Earth – Green Law Connect - Zimbabwe
- Dr Betsy Coville Exotic / Wildlife Animal Veterinarian - USA
- Dr Harvey Croze DPhil (Oxon) Collaborating Researcher – Amboseli Trust for Elephants – Kenya
- Nomusa Dube Founder, Zimbabwe Elephant Foundation
- David Ebert Advocate, Founder Director of The Animal Defense Partnership – USA
- Stefania Falcon Co-Director Green Group Simonstown, Founder Future 4 Wildlife Africa – South Africa
- Michele Franko Captive Elephant Caregiver and Advocate - US
- Dr Toni Frohoff Ethologist and Behavioral Biologist, Founder of TerraMar Research – USA
- Dr Marion E. Garai Elephant Behaviour Specialist - South Africa
- Dr Ross Harvey Environmental Economist – Botswana
- Heike Henderson-Altenstein Co-Founder, Future for Elephants e.V. - Germany
- Iris Ho Elephant Policy Consultant and Head of Campaigns and Policy for Pan African Sanctuary Alliance (PASA)
- Professor Bob Jacobs Neuroscience Researcher – Colorado College – USA
- Lynne James Independent, Elephant Conservation - Zimbabwe
- Dr Mark Jones Veterinarian, Born Free Foundation – United Kingdom
- David Kabambo Founder Director of Peace for Conservation – Wildlife Management - Tanzania
- Dr Paula Kahumbu WildlifeDirect - Kenya
- Jim Karani Advocate, Lawyers for Animal Protection in Africa – Kenya
- Professor Mohan Kharel Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu - Nepal
- Dr Winnie Kiiru Founder, Conservation Kenya - Kenya
- Brigitte Kornetzky President and Founder of Elefanten in Not - Switzerland / India Kahindi Lekalhaile Africa Network for Animal Welfare - Kenya
- Chris Lewis Captivity Research Officer Born Free Foundation – United Kingdom
- Dr Keith Lindsay Conservation Biologist Collaborating Researcher Amboseli Trust for Elephants – United Kingdom
- Dr Smaragda Louw Director, Ban Animal Trading - South Africa
- Sangita Iyer B.Sc., M.A., Founder of Voice for Asian Elephants Society, Nat Geo Explorer and Wildlife Filmmaker - Canada
- Linda Masudze Advocate 4 Earth - Zimbabwe
- Duncan McNair Lawyer, CEO of Save The Asian Elephants Varda Mehrotra Co-Founder, Samayu, A Just World – India
- Dr Cynthia Moss Director, Amboseli Trust for Elephants – Kenya
- Dr Nurzhafarina Binti Othman Founder Seratu Aatai, Elephant Conservation and Research Co-Ordinator HUTAN-KOCP – Malaysia
- Tina Papadopoulou Biologist, Co-Founder of Friends of Bunka
- Sharon Pincott Elephant Behavioural Specialist, ex-Hwange, Zimbabwe
- Bharati Ramachandran CEO of the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations – India
- Ian Redmond OBE Founder, African Ele-Fund and Elefriends Campaign, Chairman of Ape Alliance and Co-founder of Rebalance Earth – United Kingdom
- Dr Jan Schmidt-Burbach Veterinarian, Head of Wildlife Research and Animal Welfare, World Animal Protection International
- Dr DJ Schubert Wildlife Biologist, Animal Welfare Institute - USA
- Mark Stratton Investigative Journalist, Founder of Friends of Bunka
- Dr Liz Tyson Animal Welfare Law, Programs Director - Born Free USA
- Vasanthi Vadi Trustee of the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations – India
- Prof Dan Wylie Rhodes University - South Africa

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