# Rescued Lion Cub Finds Sanctuary in South Africa Amidst Controversy



Freya, a six-month-old lion cub, has embarked on a new chapter of her life in South Africa after being rescued from the wildlife trade in Lebanon. On Thursday, she cautiously emerged from her transport crate to explore her new home at the Drakenstein Lion Park in Paarl. Freya’s relocation was facilitated by Humane Society International and highlighted South Africa’s complex relationship with its lion population.

Drakenstein Lion Park provides sanctuary to lions rescued from zoos, circuses, and abusive situations worldwide. However, despite the country's reputation for conservation, South Africa also sustains a controversial captive lion industry. Lions are bred for petting, canned hunting, and the lion bone trade, with South Africa having special permits for exporting lion bones to Southeast Asia. The canned hunting practice involves lions being shot in enclosures, a stark contrast to the ethical sanctuaries like Drakenstein.

Freya joins her brother, Pi, another lion cub rescued from Lebanon. Pi had been illegally trafficked and used for social media promotion by his owner. Both cubs were eventually saved by Animals Lebanon and have been given a safe haven at Drakenstein, where they can live out their lives free from further exploitation.

This situation sparks a broader discussion on animal welfare in South Africa, especially as the government plans to phase out the captive lion industry within the next few years, despite potential legal challenges and deep-seated industry practices.