

**Spanish king apologises for Botswana hunting trip**  
**Reuters**  
**April 18 , 2012**

MADRID, April 18 — Spain's King Juan Carlos I hobbled out of a Madrid hospital today and apologised for making an elephant-hunting trip to Botswana — a jaunt which has caused outrage in a country suffering from an economic crisis.

The 74-year-old monarch, who suffers from osteoarthritis, had fractured his hip in Botswana and was flown back to Spain for emergency replacement surgery on Saturday.

"I'm much better...I'm very sorry. I made a mistake and it won't happen again," the King told reporters outside his hospital room in Madrid's San Jose hospital.

Spanish media have slammed the monarch for the expensive trip, which only came to light because of the accident.

Spain is struggling against a massive public deficit and soaring unemployment, with half of young people out of work.

News of the king's came at a time when Spain's political leaders face growing social anger and the monarchy and its role have been in focus in recent weeks.

It also angered wildlife activists, with thousands flooding social media with calls for the king to relinquish his position as honorary president of the Spanish branch of the World Wildlife Fund.

The royal family was criticised in December when Inaki Urdangarin, the husband of the king's youngest daughter Cristina, was charged in a fraud and embezzlement case.

A separate accident also drew attention to the royal family last week, when Felipe Juan Froilan, the 13-year-old son of the king's eldest daughter Infanta Elena, accidentally shot himself in the foot with a shotgun during target practice outside a family home north of Madrid.

The king, who oversaw the country's tense transition to democracy, won respect from many Spaniards in 1981 when he publicly condemned an attempted coup.

He has remained very popular, though a poll in October showed that the Spanish people's trust in the royal family was declining. — Reuters

The Malaysian Insider  
Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider  
Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/world/article/spanish-king-apologises-for-botswana-hunting-trip/>