

Call for the release of Captain Paul Watson - Letter to the Prime Minister of Denmark

Wednesday 24th July 2024,

To: The Prime Minister of Denmark, Ms Mette Frederiksen

Subject: Call for the release of Captain Paul Watson

Dear Mette Frederiksen,

On Sunday 21 July, Danish police arrested environmental activist Paul Watson in Nuuk, Greenland. He has been the subject of an Interpol Red Notice since 2012, issued at Japan's request for his actions against Japanese whalers on the high seas. The Interpol Red Notice turned out to be a political tool used by Japan to penalise Captain Watson for opposing illegal whaling in the Antarctic. On Sunday, he was stopping off in Greenland to refuel, while he and his crew were heading for the North Pacific to prevent the Japanese factory ship Kangei Maru from engaging in whaling.

Founder of the NGO Sea Shepherd, Paul Watson claims a radical but resolutely peaceful mode of action, aimed at safeguarding marine biodiversity and applying international law. Commercial whaling has been suspended since 1986, when the International Whaling Commission (IWC) imposed a moratorium. Denmark is a member of the IWC and has therefore signed the moratorium. To date, only three countries are still engaged in commercial whaling: Norway, Iceland and Japan.

Thanks to Paul Watson and his team's activism, over 5,000 cetaceans have been saved to date. A current resident of France for the past year, Paul Watson has been able to travel freely, without being troubled, in several European countries, including Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland. His arrest on the territory of a member country of the European Union therefore arouses our astonishment and concern. Paul Watson is 73 years old. If he were to be extradited in the next few weeks and then imprisoned in Japan, a country whose judicial system is regularly criticised by human rights NGOs for failing to respect the rights of defendants, he could end up spending the rest of his life in prison.

Paul Watson's arrest is part of a general trend towards increased repression of environmental activists, which we have witnessed as parliamentarians in our respective countries and which we deeply deplore. Against a context of climate crisis and global erosion of biodiversity, the protection of whistleblowers and environmental activists must be given particular attention.

For all the above reasons, we, European and national parliamentarians committed to human rights and environmental protection, urge you to release Paul Watson immediately and not to proceed with his extradition to Japan.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Fourreau, French MEP, The Left
Per Clausen, Danish MEP, The Left
Li Andersson, Finnish MEP, former Minister of Education, The Left
Manon Aubry, French MEP, President of The Left
Marie Toussaint, French MEP, The Greens/EFA
Chloé Ridel, French MEP, S&D

Dominique Voynet, French MP, former Minister of Environment, ECO
Jean-Luc Mélenchon, former French MP and MEP
Clémence Guetté, Vice-president of the French National Assembly, LFI-NFP
Mathilde Panot, President of the French parliamentary group LFI-NFP
Anne Stambach-Terreiroir, French MP, LFI-NFP
Marie-Charlotte Garin, French MP, ECO
Karine Lebon, French MP, GDR
Carola Rackete, German MEP, The Left
Manuel Bompard, French MP, LFI-NFP
Ilaria Salis, Italian MEP, The Left
Marina Mesure, French MEP, The Left
David Cormand, French MEP, The Greens/EFA
Arthur Delaporte, French MP, SOC
Aymeric Caron, French MP, REV-LFI-NFP
Rima Hassan, French MEP, The Left
Sandrine Rousseau, French MP, ECO
Lena Schilling, Austrian MEP, The Greens/EFA
Anja Hazekamp, Dutch MEP, The Left
Tilly Metz, Luxembourg MEP, The Greens/EFA
Damien Carême, French MEP, The Left
Anthony Smith, French MEP, The Left
Mickaël Bouloux, French MP, SOC
Claire Lejeune, French MP, LFI-NFP
Sebastian Everding, German MEP, The Left
Mélissa Camara, French MEP, The Greens/EFA
Thomas Pellerin-Carlin, French MEP, S&D
Sophia Chikirou, French MP, LFI-NFP
Gabriel Amard, French MP, LFI-NFP
Pierre-Yves Cadalen, French MP, LFI-NFP
Arash Saiedi, French MEP, The Left
Saskia Bricmont, Belgian MEP, The Greens/EFA
Ersilia Soudais, French MP, LFI-NFP
Leïla Chaïbi, French MEP, The Left
Arnaud Saint-Martin, French MP, LFI-NFP
Andrée Taurinya, French MP, LFI-NFP
François Piquemal, French MP, LFI-NFP
Carlos Martens Bilongo, French MP, LFI-NFP
Pouria Amirshahi, French MP, ECO
Béranger Cernon, French MP, LFI-NFP
Rodrigo Arenas, French MP, LFI-NFP
Murielle Lepyraud, French MP, LFI-NFP
Bastien Lachaud, French MP, LFI-NFP
Aurélien Taché, French MP, LFI-NFP
Majdouline Sbaï, French MEP, The Greens/EFA
Raphaël Arnault, French MP, LFI-NFP
Gabrielle Cathala, French MP, LFI-NFP
René Pilato, French MP, LFI-NFP
Farida Amrani, French MP, LFI-NFP
Andy Kerbrat, French MP, LFI-NFP
Aurélien Le Coq, French MP, LFI-NFP
Thomas Waitz, Austrian MEP, The Greens/EFA
Hugo Prevost, French MP, LFI-NFP
Maxime Laisney, French MP, LFI-NFP
Mathilde Hignet, French MP, LFI-NFP
Aurélien Saintoul, French MP, LFI-NFP

Zahia Hamdane, French MP, LFI-NFP
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Danielle Simonnet, French MP, ECO
Jean-François Coulomme, French MP, LFI-NFP
Damien Maudet, French MP, LFI-NFP
Ségolène Amiot, French MP, LFI-NFP
Ana Miranda Paz, Spanish MEP, The Greens/EFA
Elise Leboucher, French MP, LFI-NFP
Sylvain Carrière, French MP, LFI-NFP