

From

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and

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Distinguished Members of the Turkish Parliament,

It has come to our attention that there are plans to pass a law which would give more room for mass slaughter of stray animals. We kindly urge you not to pass this law. From our experience in The Netherlands we know that killing animals or capturing them and keeping them in overcrowded shelters in poor conditions, costs money but does not protect human health or solve any problems in the long run. On the contrary, such practices have been proven to be detrimental to the reputation of countries and contribute to more violence in society. We know from experience that seriously investing in the TNVR (Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate and Release) programs and awareness, is the most effective and ethical method to manage stray animal populations.

We appreciate that the humane treatment of stray animals has been a good and valued practice in Turkey for hundreds of years and are sure that it is still an important value of the Turkish people to treat all living beings with care and humanity.

There are at least five reasons why the Turkish government should not pass the new law which enables more killing of stray animals, but should work together with animal welfare organizations and the international community to strengthen the implementation of TNVR and to work on awareness in society.

First of all, a humane and animal-friendly dog and cat population management is important for both people and animals. Dogs and cats can be wonderful companions as they provide significant psychological and physiological benefits to people and help create social bridges in our communities. Many other countries have shown that the stray dog population can best be managed using the capture, neuter, vaccinate and release programme (TNVR), combined with education of the public. This is not only a more humane method than killing animals or keeping them captured under horrible circumstances, but it is also a more effective method in keeping dog and cat populations controlled.

The Netherlands is an example of a country where there are no stray dogs anymore. This was achieved by implementation of the TNVR method and cooperation with animal welfare organisations to get dogs and cats from asylums chipped, registered and adopted. Educating people about the behaviour of dogs and cats and about what it takes to have a pet is another factor of importance. In the Netherlands microchipping and registering dogs is also mandatory. This all has contributed to less abandoned and neglected animals and to the fact that The Netherlands doesn't have an issue with stray dogs anymore.

Second of all, the EU has recently presented a draft law to increase the protection of cats and dogs, in line with recognition that animals are sentient beings, as enshrined in the EU treaties. The draft law includes a mandatory system for all EU countries for the registration of cats and dogs, as well as additional steps to

combat illegal pet trade. As the EU is an important partner to Turkey, we would applaud steps to align and increase the protection of stray animals in line with these commitments.

Third, we would like to remind you that Turkey is part of the [World Organisation for Animal Health \(WOAH\)](#) and has signed the [Animal Welfare Strategy](#) with the objective of achieving: “A world where the welfare of animals is respected, promoted and advanced, in ways that complement the pursuit of animal health, human well-being, socio-economic development and environmental sustainability”. Turkey has pledged to give animals freedom from hunger, malnutrition, thirst, pain, injury and stress. The killing of stray animals would be contradictory to these commitments

Fourth of all, the news about the possible killing of innocent animals in Turkey is spreading internationally and damages the reputation of the country and its leaders. Tourists, politicians and citizens worldwide are already appalled by the situation. State sponsored violence against stray animals is not only bad for the reputation of Turkey, but it also causes psychological damage to those who witness it.

Finally, the draft law which would make mass killing of stray animals easier, is also likely to contribute to a more violent society and thus poses a threat to public safety. [Research shows a well-documented link](#) between violence against animals and violence against humans. This means that people who use violence against animals are more likely to use violence against people as well. Increasingly, child protection and social service agencies, mental health professionals, and educators recognize that animal abuse is aggressive and antisocial behaviour. It is also a reliable predictor of violence against people after a young abuser grows up. Stopping the violence against stray animals would contribute to a more compassionate society, that would better protect the physical and mental health of each citizen, especially the health of children.

The draft law which enables mass killing of animals would create problems instead of solve problems, and it doesn't belong in a civilized society like Turkey.

That's why we kindly urge you to:

1. Not to pass the new law which would make the mass killing of stray animals easier.
2. Instead connect with national and international animal welfare organisations to start investing in the implementation of the stray animal policy according to the most effective and humane [Trap Neuter Return \(TNVR\) methods](#). This would be in line with the advice of the most respected institutions such as the WHO, FAO, and the WOAH, who are strongly opposed to the mass killing of dogs and cats and who point to TNVR as the only effective method to get the population of dogs and cats under control. There are many organisations willing to help you make positive steps.

It is up to you to act according to international agreements and values. The Netherlands has proven that the only way to manage stray animal populations and create a safe environment for all, is to stop killing animals and start working with animal experts on rolling out TNVR programmes and educating people. We are confident that Turkey is able to make those steps as well, for the benefit of not only animals, but also humans.

We are looking forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

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