



Press release

Whale Protection Advocates Condemn Start of Norwegian Whale Hunt

Increased whaling numbers contrary to scientific and international decisions

Washington, DC/Wädenswil, Switzerland/Munich, April 3, 2017. A coalition of international whale protection organizations today strongly condemned the start of Norway's 2017 whaling season, which began on April 1. The coalition believes the hunt could result in the cruel slaughter of up to 999 minke whales, a self-allocated quota more than 100 higher than that set by the Norwegian Government in 2016. In addition, 90 percent of the minke whales hunted by Norway's whaling industry are females and almost all of them are pregnant, effectively nearly doubling the actual death toll and seriously impacting future generations of the species.

The increased quota comes as domestic demand for whale meat has flagged and international exports of Norwegian whale products have escalated, in contravention of global bans on both commercial whaling and international trade in whale products.

This year's whaling quota, which is not authorized by the *International Whaling Commission* (IWC), allows hunting in areas where it is known that most of the whales will be female and pregnant and cements Norway's status as the world's number one whale-killing nation.

"Norway is a modern nation but its whaling practices are cruel, irresponsible, unnecessary and frozen in time," said Jennifer Lonsdale, Environmental Investigation Agency Senior Oceans Campaigner. "Norway's reputation is consistently stained by the blood of the sentient and intelligent whales that it kills. It ignores the important contributions the whales make to maintaining healthy marine ecosystems, including in Norwegian waters."

Norway has slaughtered more than 12,000 whales since 1993, in defiance of the IWC's longstanding ban on commercial whaling. To make matters worse, Per Sandberg, Norway's Minister of Fisheries, recently indicated he would like to see this year's quota of 999 whales double in the future – despite no endorsement by the IWC Scientific Committee that such a high annual body count is sustainable.

"It is the height of biological recklessness for Norway to set whaling quotas that the world's leading cetacean scientists have not declared to be sustainable. False information does not become true, no matter how often pro-whalers repeat it," offered Nicolas Entrup, consultant to OceanCare. "Ultimately, however, this is not an issue of what is sustainable. Rather, it's about what is necessary – commercial whaling is no longer necessary and the global ban must be enforced."

Norway's rapidly growing trade in whale products is also cause for concern. In 2016 alone, it exported 197 tonnes of whale meat and blubber to Japan, more than in the previous two years combined, all in defiance of the international ban on the commercial trade in whale products imposed by the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES).

"Norway is hiding behind its objections and reservations to decisions agreed in international treaties, by continuing to peddle its whale products internationally," said Dr. Sandra Altherr, a biologist with Pro Wildlife. "Norway must comply with its obligations under these treaties,

embrace the fact that whales are worth far more alive than dead, and the European Union must urgently and strongly oppose Norwegian whaling in its waters.”

The organizations fear that increased international trade helps keep afloat an industry that has been struggling, given a decline in demand for whale meat in Norway. In January 2017, for example, approximately 60 tonnes of minke whale meat was donated to Norwegian soup kitchens and senior centers, as businesses sought to offload unsold product approaching its sell-by date. In addition, in recent years, more than 100 tonnes of whale products were delivered to Rogaland Pelsdyrfôrlaget – the largest manufacturer of animal feed for the Norwegian fur industry.

“This cruel industry is dying as demand for whale products in Norway evaporates,” said DJ Schubert, a wildlife biologist with the Animal Welfare Institute. “It is time for Norway to discard the harpoons and end the unnecessary suffering of whales and their unborn offspring by prohibiting commercial whaling – no other alternative is acceptable.”

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Images and captions

- Whalers cutting up a dead minke whale on board their ship ©Michael Tenten/IMMCS
- A dead minke whale being hauled onto a Norwegian whaling ship ©Michael Tenten/IMMCS
- Whale meat and blubber on board a Norwegian whaling ship ©Michael Tenten/IMMCS
- Landing of a minke whale ©Michael Tenten/IMMCS

Further links and information

- [Frozen in Time: How modern Norway clings to its whaling past](#) (2016) by OceanCare, Pro Wildlife and Animal Welfare Institute
Citation: Altherr, S., O’Connell, K., Fisher, S., Lüber, S. (2016). Frozen in Time. Report by Animal Welfare Institute, OceanCare and Pro Wildlife. 23 pp.
- Norwegian documentary „Slaget om kvalen“ that shows, that 90% of whales caught in Norway are female and most of these are pregnant: <https://www.nrk.no/mr/dei-fleste-skotne-kvalane-har-foster-i-magen-1.13414065>
- Graphs/statistics available upon request



About the Animal Welfare Institute

The Animal Welfare Institute (www.awionline.org) is a nonprofit charitable organization founded in 1951 and dedicated to reducing animal suffering caused by people. AWI engages policymakers, scientists, industry, and the public to achieve better treatment of animals everywhere – in the laboratory, on the farm, in commerce, at home, and in the wild. For more information, visit www.awionline.org.

About the Environmental Investigation Agency

The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is an independent not-for-profit campaigning organisation based in London and Washington, DC. It is committed to bringing about change that protects the natural world from environmental crime and abuse. Its campaigns include strengthening global protection for cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) and reducing marine plastic pollution as well as investigating and campaigning against a wide range of environmental crimes, including illegal wildlife trade, illegal logging, hazardous waste and trade in climate and ozone-altering chemicals. For more information, visit www.eia-international.org.

About OceanCare

OceanCare has been working for marine wildlife and ocean protection since 1989. In 2011 the organisation was granted Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. OceanCare has been an observer at the IWC since 1992 and is very familiar with the people and rules within this forum. OceanCare published studies on the health risks associated with cetacean meat consumption, thereby initiating cooperation between the IWC and the WHO. Further, OceanCare has been represented in the IWC Scientific Committee since 2015. For more information, visit www.oceancare.org.

About Pro Wildlife

Pro Wildlife is a Germany-based charity, dedicated to the protection of wildlife. Pro Wildlife supports in situ projects in several African and Asian countries and runs awareness campaigns to reduce wildlife trade and poaching. Pro Wildlife regularly attends conferences such as the IWC and CITES to improve the worldwide protection status of wildlife. For more information, visit <https://www.prowildlife.de/>.