

Faroe Islands: 60 pilot whales killed in first hunt of the year

Berlin, Vienna, Zurich, May 8, 2022. Yesterday, Saturday, May 7, a so-called 'grindadrap' (whale drive-hunt) occurred on the Faroe Islands for the first time this year. Eyewitnesses report that an entire school consisting of about 60 pilot whales was killed at the Sandágerði beach, South of the Faroes capital of Tórshavn. According to reports, other, smaller dolphins that were among the pilot whales driven onto the beach were released. The international marine conservation organisation OceanCare expresses its deep disappointment at the continuation of the hunting of small cetaceans on the Faroe Islands, which are part of the kingdom of Denmark.

Following the mass killing of more than 1,400 Atlantic white-sided dolphins in September 2021, the prime minister of the Faroe Islands announced a comprehensive review of the events. Numerous countries, including the European Union and the United Kingdom, called for an end to the hunting of small cetaceans. The investigation report has been submitted to the Faroes government but is not yet publicly accessible, and no discussions seem to have occurred further to its submission.

"The release of dolphins in yesterday's drive hunt may be a positive sign but suggests that the Faroese are continuing unrestricted cruel and unnecessary hunting of pilot whales, which also belong to the dolphin family" said Fabienne McLellan, managing director of OceanCare.

"The killing of an entire group of pilot whales demonstrates an unwillingness to question a practice for which there is no justification in the 21st century. We had expected that they would have waited for the review of what happened in the autumn of 2021 to conclude and then engage in discourse and dialogue with not only the Faroese community, but also internationally with those who oppose the hunt" comments Nicolas Entrup, Director of International Relations at OceanCare.

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Background information

In September 2021, a mass killing of Atlantic white-sided dolphins occurred in the Faroe Islands: At least 1,428 white-sided dolphins were killed in Skálafjørður Bay, and only ten days later 52 pilot whales were also killed elsewhere in the islands. In total, 667 pilot whales were killed in 2021. The disturbing pictures of the September kill went all around the world causing huge concern and upset. Even on the Faroe Islands horror spread, because the number of dead dolphins involved and the brutality of the hunt were unprecedented. The island government was forced to consider addressing this and told the concerned international community that they were in a review process. However, the review, which was started in September, seems to have stalled and now the killing continues.

Further links and information:

- Official numbers: <https://heimabeiti.fo/2013-2022>
- Article in.fo: <https://in.fo/news-detail/default-1f15af7ab8>
- Article kvf: <https://kvf.fo/greinar/2022/05/07/um-60-hvalir-logdu-beinini>
- Video of the grindadrap (by SS UK) (alert: disturbing content): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGXNR7Q9K3o>
- Report UNDER PRESSURE by OceanCare, Chapter 5 on whaling in European waters: https://www.oceancare.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UNDER-PRESSURE_Chapter-05_whaling_low-res_web.pdf



About OceanCare:

OceanCare is a Swiss non-profit organisation. It was founded in 1989 and has a strong commitment to realistic and cooperative initiatives. The organisation works at national and international level in the areas of marine pollution, environmental changes, fisheries, whaling, sealing, captivity of marine mammals and public education.

OceanCare holds Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and is partner of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the UNEP/CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), as well as UNEP/MAP. Since 2021, OceanCare is accredited observer to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the International Seabed Authority (ISA). The organisation has been an observer at the IWC since 1992. OceanCare has also been accredited as part of the Major Group 'Science & Technology' to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which is the governing body of UNEP and is a part of the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter. www.oceancare.org