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Copy to:

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Zurich, Switzerland, 4th October 2024

## Open Letter: Appeal for the Release of Captain Paul Watson

Dear Prime Minister Frederiksen,  
Dear Minister Rasmussen, Dear Minister Hummelgaard,

On behalf of OceanCare, an international marine conservation organisation that holds Special Consultative Status on marine issues with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2011, and our more than 30.000 supporters worldwide, we are reaching out to you in response to the arrest and ongoing detainment of the Canadian-American environmental activist, Paul Watson. He was arrested in the Greenlandic capital, Nuuk, on 21<sup>st</sup> July for anti-whaling activities in Antarctica in 2010.

We note that Captain Watson's detention has recently (2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024), been extended and enters a third month based on an international arrest warrant issued by Japan. We are deeply disturbed by both his arrest and his possible extradition to Japan. While OceanCare is engaged in a different way than Paul Watson and Sea Shepherd to end commercial whaling and to increase the protection of cetaceans, we are seriously concerned about this situation.

Seventy-three-year-old Captain Watson has dedicated his life to protecting the oceans and, in particular, has tried to protect whales from illegal Japanese whaling activities in international waters. We note that in March 2014 the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) has ruled against Japan in a case involving charges by Australia that the country was using a scientific research programme to mask a commercial whaling venture in the Antarctic. The Hague-based UN judicial arm ordered a temporary halt to the activities, largely involving fin, humpback and minke whales, finding that the Japanese Whaling Research Programme under Special Permit in the Antarctic (JARPA II) is "not in accordance with three provisions of the Schedule to the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW)."

We, at OceanCare, are committed to the protection of the world's seas and ocean and their marine wildlife and, as such, we oppose all forms of ongoing commercial whaling. We believe this activity to be unnecessary, meeting no pressing human needs, and being a threat to the conservation and welfare of whale populations. We note that all EU Member States, that are IWC members, including Denmark, recently expressed their staunch support for the global moratorium on commercial whaling as evidenced this month in Resolution IWC/69/9.5/01 brought forward by the EU and adopted at the recent IWC69 meeting.

Despite this, as well as ignoring the voice of many other nations, Japan's whaling fleet have continued to contravene the International Whaling Commission's moratorium and, by leaving the IWC in 2019, started to engage in commercial whaling activities outside of the provisions of the appropriate international organisation for the conservation and management of whales recognised by UNCLOS.

We do not understand why the Danish authorities would now act on Japan's behalf in arresting and detaining Captain Watson for possible extradition noting that Denmark is such a strong proponent of human rights and that the Kingdom of Denmark is repeatedly in the top ranks internationally in the sphere of democracy. Indeed, as the cradle of the Aarhus Convention, which has been hailed as remarkable achievement not only in terms of protection of the environment, but also in terms of the promotion and protection of human rights, we call on the Kingdom of Denmark to exercise appropriate wisdom and leniency in the case of Paul Watson.

We fear that Captain Watson's rights will likely be violated in that he will be made an "example of", and not receive a fair trial in Japan if he were to be extradited. His current and potential continued confinement pose a serious risk to his health and will be seen by many as an unjust "political move" to muzzle environmental activists.

We cannot accept the repression and criminalisation of environmental activism. We therefore ask for your urgent assistance and entreat you to intervene in Captain Watson's case. Specifically, we ask you to encourage his release and save his life.

Captain Watson's case is not just about him; it is about a regime that continues to violate principles of global justice and environmental custodianship and one that will go to great lengths in the pursuit of personal vendettas. And, sadly, all at the expense of movements caring about the marine environment and, in particular, attempting to protect the whales.

Thank you for your time and urgent action.

Yours faithfully,



Nicolas Entrup  
Director of International Relations



Fabienne McLellan  
Managing Director

**About OceanCare:**

OceanCare was founded in Switzerland in 1989 and is an international marine conservation non-governmental organisation. The organisation pursues the protection and restoration of the marine environment and marine wildlife with a strong policy focus, combining research, conservation projects and education. OceanCare's remit includes marine pollution, climate change, marine



mammal hunting and the environmental consequences of fisheries. Its work is supported by a team of scientific, legal and policy experts, and involves strategic collaboration with a number of partner organisations and affiliation with many international bodies.

OceanCare holds Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and Observer Status at the United National Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). 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.

OceanCare is an accredited Observer to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and is a Partner of 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), the Barcelona Convention (UNEP/MAP), as well as the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). OceanCare has been an observer at the IWC since 1992. [www.oceancare.org](http://www.oceancare.org)