

World Animal Day marked in Turkey with calls for law change

TUBA PARLAK

ISTANBUL – Hürriyet Daily News

Monday, October 4, 2010

Turkish animal rights activists are hopeful of a securing a change in the country's laws that would criminalize the abuse of animals after collecting a record number of signatures for a petition campaign.

The petition campaign has collected 250,000 signatures in only 55 days, higher than the total amount of signatures gathered by Greenpeace during all of its campaigns in the country, fashion designer Barbaros Şansal, one of the campaign's supporters, said during Oct. 4 World Animal Day.

Signatures collected by nongovernmental organization Animal Right's Platform during a sit-in led by Turkish actress Tuna Arman on Istanbul's İstiklal Avenue were taken to the Justice Ministry's General Directorate for Law early Monday.

The campaign, which started Aug. 15, argued that animal abuse should be reclassified as a criminal offense rather than a misdemeanor. Under current Animal Law No. 5199, which falls under the Law on Misdemeanors, a person who abuses or rapes a stray animal receives a fine of 300 liras, but the case is not investigated as a judicial case.

"My experience as we stood there gathering signatures from passersby is that those raping animals consider their acts as a natural sexual preference, not as perverseness," Şansal said.

Speaking on the issue in the past to the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review, Arman said, "If there is a person who raped an animal in your district, your children are not in safe." Oct. 4 is also World Children's Day.

After presenting helping present the signature campaign to the Justice Ministry, Tuna Bayık said Justice Commission Chairman Ahmet İyimaya told him that authorities plan to work in collaboration with the group to rectify the matter.

There were protests in many parts of Turkey ahead of Animal Day, Anatolia news agency reported.

In Konak Square in the Aegean province of İzmir, activists from the Animal Rights Federation protested animal abuse with banners reading "The murderers in the air, on land and under the water are among us."

The action was supported by the animal activists from the Mediterranean province of Antalya, who "urged deputies" to stop animal abuse.

Holy fish, new-born chimps, and killer bear amnesty

Anatolia news agency also reported on the people of Kızık village in the eastern province of Malatya, who consider some local fish holy, burying the dead fish at the village's cemetery and even sacrificing animals to honor them.

Kept at an artificial pond built on a natural spring, the fish are considered holy because the water in the pond is believed to heal the sick and be effective against infertility.

Elsewhere, animal rights activists successfully lobbied for the cancellation of an Environment and Forest Ministry cull order on a bear that is suspected of having recently killed a village imam in the eastern province of Erzurum, Doğan news agency reported.

The head of the Hunters' Association, Abdullah Erzurum, who had formed a hunting party to locate the bear, said he resented the final decision, adding that activists who considered human life of secondary importance should come to the area to watch over the bear population.

At the same time, zoo personnel in the Darıca in the northwestern province of Kocaeli celebrated a birthday for the center's newest resident, a chimpanzee named Cina. The chimp was reportedly born 20 days ago, but staff at the Darıca Zoo chose to wait until Monday to celebrate the birth.

© 2009 Hurriyet Daily News

URL: www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-attempts-for-better-animal-protection-on-oct-4-2010-10-04