



Letter of Protest

Dear all,

It is with indescribable concern that we are writing you this letter of protest. We, the Ohrid SOS Citizens' Initiative, established for and devoted to the promotion and the protection of the universal natural and cultural values of the only UNESCO region in our country and the Macedonian animal rights activists, call upon you to take action in line with your competences against the brutality that is at this very moment taking place on the streets of Ohrid, Struga, and Resen: the mass poisoning of stray animals.

Ohrid, known by the world as the city of culture, center of literacy, cradle of religion, and bastion of civilization, in these past 10 days has sadly become the very opposite of these epithets: the epitome of abuse, horrific inhumanity, and extreme cruelty. The streets of the city have become mass graveyards, overflowing with exceptionally disturbing scenes of suffering, helpless animals, breathing their last breath in a pool of blood and vomit from their own decaying organs, a death that is neither peaceful nor painless but one that is the equivalent of unbearable suffering, unfathomable to the majority of us. And these gruesome scenes are not limited to Ohrid – intelligent sensible beings suffer the same terrible agony on the streets of Struga and Resen too.

Macedonian institutions have been failing miserably in this respect for far too long. Not one investigation has been conducted with an outcome of conviction. Not one person has been indicted, although the prevalence of these atrocities is approximately once every other month in a different city/area of our country with tens of deaths per case.

First and foremost, animal rights are guaranteed with the Macedonian Law on Animal Welfare and Protection. Second, the torture and murder of animals is a felony under the Macedonian Criminal Code and a prison sentence of up to 1 year is projected for offenses. The spreading of poisons is also a felony under the Macedonian Criminal Code with a 1-to-5-year prison sentence envisaged for the perpetrator/s. For endangering the environment with poisonous and dangerous substances causing danger to human life and health and destroying animal and plant life, a prison sentence of up to 10 years is envisaged. The spreading of poisons is not only a threat to stray animals, but a death sentence for the region's most delicate flora and fauna: It contributes to the pollution of water and soil. Water that we, the locals, drink. Soil, that we, the locals, use to grow our crops. There is a [documented death of a swan](#)—considered a symbol of Lake Ohrid—according to information from a local animal protection group. The swan's death followed a mass poisoning of strays in the village of Radožda, Struga. The spreading of poisons is a grave danger for animals and humans alike, with small children being the most vulnerable, for the poisons on our streets can kill a 30 kg animal in a matter of minutes!

The [Declaration on Consciousness](#) signed by an international group of prominent neuroscientists, in the presence of Mr. Stephen Hawking, indisputably corroborates the long known fact that animals are sentient beings and must be treated as such. Man's best friend does not deserve this rampant genocide to go by unpunished a minute more!

Our patience with hollow excuses is at an end. If the Macedonian government and Macedonian institutions are truly devoted to the reinstitution of the legal state and the preservation of the outstanding values of the UNESCO region, then they must take swift action. We demand an immediate investigation, not such as that which is eternally underway here, but one that will be efficiently and competently closed with transparent results. We demand to see the perpetrators convicted. We demand justice!



We demand

- a) The Ministry of Interior (MOI) to immediately initiate an investigation, collect evidence, and submit it for examination by forensics and forensic medicine ex officio;
- b) Forensic medicine to perform autopsies (necropsy) on carcasses;
- c) The public prosecutor to initiate an indictment;
- d) The Food and Veterinary Agency and the Agriculture Inspectorate (with competence for controlling the trade of hazardous substances) to conduct a joint investigation supervision, as well as The State Environment Inspectorate to identify the danger to the environment, and the State Sanitary and Health Inspectorate to identify the hazard to the health and security of citizens. (Inspectors should submit appropriate solutions to the Ministry of Interior for persons who have purchased relevant substances recently and/or punish pharmacies with temporary injunctions for doing business if they have issued such substances without appropriate procedures);
- e) MOI to locate suspects based on the work of all the institutions above, question them, and interview witnesses;
- f) The public prosecutor to declare prime suspects and start proceedings;
- g) A court to make a decision on the basis of evidence; and
- h) UNESCO, the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals in the European Parliament, and the EU Delegation in Skopje, to use all their available mechanisms to foster the promptness of Macedonian institutions to reach an appropriate final conclusion.

If there are laws, let us respect them. If the laws are violated, let us punish those who trespass against them. For those that violate the principles of a civilized society are a threat to civilization itself.

Awaiting for your timely response in line with the pressing urgency of the situation.

Respectfully,
Activists of the Ohrid SOS Citizens' Initiative
Macedonian animal rights activists