Wednesday, 5th March

**Greece set to export live animals to Saudi Arabia**

Compassion in World Farming is deeply concerned by Greece’s plans to export live animals to Saudi Arabia for slaughter.

An investigation by Compassion with Animals Australia has exposed horrifying slaughter conditions for European animals exported to Turkey and Middle Eastern countries; Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank. This evidence is in addition to previous investigations by Compassion in Egypt and Palestine. Slaughter conditions in Saudi Arabia are likely to be similar to those in neighbouring countries.

Our Investigation Unit witnessed animals in slaughter houses forced violently into position, being dragged by their tails, legs, fleeces and even eye sockets\(^1\). This is at the end of journeys that can last over a week.

Some animals were strung up with chains while fully conscious, their whole body weight on one leg\(^2\). This will cause extreme pain and distress and is likely to cause tearing in the muscles and ligaments around the hip and leg joints. European cattle being slaughtered at an abattoir in Turkey were restrained in mechanical boxes, which tip them upside down to cut their throats. Once their throats have been cut they are then dropped onto the bodies of other dying animals whilst still conscious.

Other animals face a slow and terrifying death on the streets. Animals are handled brutally, being pulled out of the backs of vehicles without ramps. They are bound by their feet, tripped over with ropes and contorted into painful positions and tied to the ground or pinned down by large groups of people with no evident training in good slaughter techniques.

Often, animals have their throats hacked at with blunt knives until their throats are cut. In many cases they remain conscious for several minutes after having their throats cut.

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\(^1\) OIE recommendations Article 3.7.5.2(1e) prohibits the dragging of animals by body parts. This guideline was breached in the case of all the animals observed.

\(^2\) OIE recommendations Article 3.7.5.2(3b.i) prohibits the suspending or hoisting of animals by the legs. In two slaughterhouses it was standard practice to hoist by one rear leg before slaughter. Two cattle were hoisted by the rear leg and left suspended and conscious for the entire duration of our investigators visit; over one hour.
Olga Kikou, European Affairs Manager at Compassion, said “This planned trade in live Greek animals is unacceptable. Animals in neighbouring countries to Saudi Arabia are being slaughtered in conditions of unimaginable cruelty. These horrifying scenes of inept slaughter mean that Greek animals could be subjected to terrible suffering at the most vulnerable moment of their lives.”

Three million animals a year are exported live from EU to non-EU countries. It is likely that a large proportion of them face similar slaughter conditions after gruelling journeys by land and sea. European animals are being subjected to treatment that is illegal in Europe.

All of the countries Compassion investigated have agreed to slaughter recommendations set by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), yet in every slaughterhouse visited and when animals were slaughtered on the street these recommendations are being ignored.

Olga continues: “We are calling on the Greek Agriculture Minister not to start this trade in Greek animals to Saudi Arabia and instead to develop its meat exports.”

Australia is one of the world’s biggest exporters of live animals and Australian government figures show that Australia’s exports of meat to the Middle East were worth more than live exports. Compassion is urging Greece to develop its meat export trade.

Compassion is calling on EU Agriculture Ministers in the five member states that export the most animals; Bulgaria, Romania, France, Hungary and Germany to provide practical support to countries to improve slaughter practises and to implement the international standards on the welfare of animals world organisation for animal health.

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Notes to Editors:

For further information, video footage, images or to arrange interviews contact Olga Kikou or 0000000 or email olga.kikou@ciwf.org

Compassion in World Farming is Europe’s leading farm animal welfare organisation campaigning to end factory farming and to achieve humane and sustainable food. With headquarters in the UK, we have offices in France, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland, Brussels and the Czech Republic, as well as operating in the US, China and South Africa.