



Governor Olly Dondokambey
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29th January 2018

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Dear Governor Olly Dondokambey,

We are writing to you again on behalf of the Dog Meat Free-Indonesia (DMFI) Coalition in response to your recent statement¹ regarding the conditions of the “traditional markets” in North Sulawesi such as “Tomohon Extreme Market”.

We conducted numerous visits to these markets, and gathered more than 10 hours of footage documenting the routine extreme animal cruelty taking place there. Our video evidence shows dogs being repeatedly bludgeoned over the head and screaming in pain, whilst their traumatised cage mates look on, and also shows many dogs being blow torched whilst clearly still alive.

Whilst you may choose to defend these practices of “extreme meat” consumption as local “custom” to the Minahasa people, we and people across Indonesia and the world cannot agree with you. These are acts of cruelty that are outlawed in every developed country with robust animal protection laws, and it is to Indonesia’s shame if this shocking situation is not taken more seriously. We remain resolute in our position that “custom” and “habits” should never be allowed to excuse or normalise animal abuse. The reality is that, regardless of its origin, the live animal markets undermine national and public interest and safety, and promote the illegal sourcing and trading of animals, posing a serious risk to human health, and animal welfare. This treatment of animals is both illegal and wholly unacceptable to the Indonesian and global community.

The response you have given thus far is not only inadequate in face of such obscene animal cruelty, but also shows a lack of regard for the health and safety of the Indonesian people.

Considering the clear risk that the dog meat trade poses to public health in terms of the transmission of lethal rabies and other diseases, and the fact that the market trade is almost entirely facilitated by the trans-provincial transport of dogs that breaks Indonesia’s own disease control and prevention laws, it is incumbent on you as a public official to give the

¹ https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3834130/anjing-dipukul-dan-dibakar-di-tomohon-gubernur-sulut-itu-tak-sadis?utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=detikcomsocmed&utm_medium=btn&utm_content=news



matter more serious and thorough consideration.

For that reason, we reiterate here the grave concerns we outlined in our correspondence to you on the 2nd January 2018, notably:

1- Human health, public safety and societal impacts of “traditional” live animal markets:

The dog meat trade encourages the uncontrolled movement and unregulated slaughter of many thousands of dogs – and similar numbers of cats – each week at markets in North Sulawesi, posing a significant human health risk through the potential transmission of animal borne diseases, notably rabies, and toxins:

- There is mounting evidence that the trade in dogs for human consumption plays a significant role in rabies transmission. The trade encourages the mass movement of dogs of unknown disease and vaccination status to be transported long distances, often between provinces, increasing the risk of the spread of the disease plus infection to handlers who are at a high risk of being bitten and scratched. Such mass and unregulated movement of dogs contravenes recommendations and guidelines by key health advisory bodies – including the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as well as breaching Indonesia’s own national disease prevention legislation.
- Given the national government’s policy on rabies prevention and control, and the ASEAN Plus 3 member countries’ pledge to eliminate rabies by 2020, this unregulated and illegal trade of dogs into densely-populated cities from rabies endemic areas could be construed as negligence.
- Furthermore, the presence of rabies-positive dogs sourced and traded for human consumption has already been demonstrated by studies that have revealed a high positive incidence of rabies-infected dogs in slaughterhouses and markets from throughout the region, including Indonesia. For example, in 2007, research conducted in markets in North Sulawesi (Manado, Airmadidi and Langowan) showed that between 7.8% and 10.6% of dogs being sold for human consumption were infected with rabies. Furthermore, the mass movement of dogs across and between islands has been cited as playing a key role in the spread of rabies between islands in Indonesia.
- Qualitative and quantitative evidence collected from throughout Asia, coupled with precedents for disease control in ASEAN, indicate that regulation and maintenance of the dog meat trade is not compatible with rabies control, and poses a grave threat to Indonesia’s pledge to eliminate rabies by 2020, thereby compromising region-wide efforts to control the spread of diseases.
- In addition, sick and diseased dogs are routinely slaughtered and sold for meat, as well as those who have been killed in a way that poses a grave, and potentially fatal, risk to both the public and consumers:



- In the markets, dogs (and cats) are routinely bludgeoned on the head, with far-reaching blood splatterings, and potential spread of brain matter;
 - There are increasing numbers of reports of dogs being poisoned and their carcasses being sold for consumption. Poisons routinely used by unscrupulous traders, such as strychnine, are highly toxic and experts have confirmed that humans can be poisoned by eating this contaminated meat. There are increasing numbers of media reports of people – including children – dying after consuming dog meat.
- Furthermore, with inadequate waste disposal systems in place to manage the mass slaughter of dogs, cats and other animals, blood, faeces and other animal waste runs from wherever the animals are slaughtered, onto the streets, presenting a serious risk to public health.

Investigations have revealed that the theft of dogs (and cats) by traders is the main source of dogs (and cats) into markets in North Sulawesi. An estimated 90% of all dogs are stolen and 80% are imported from other provinces, both of which make this trade illegal. By allowing the dog meat trade to continue, dog theft will go on and this could threaten social stability, aggravate existing social conflicts, and undermine the authority of the government and the credibility of provincial and national laws.

2- Impact on Children’s Physical and Psychological well-being

Another shocking aspect of our investigations as documented in the video footage shared previously² is that it shows young children estimated to be between the ages of two and ten years old, watching as animals are beaten to death. Whilst the government of Indonesia looks to promote programs to make “good citizens”, experts confirm that exposing children to animal cruelty is psychologically damaging.

Dr. Mary Lou Randour, senior advisor for Animal Cruelty Programs at the Animal Welfare Institute watched DMFI’s footage and commented:

“Witnessing violence of any type, particularly animal abuse, is a traumatic event for a child, as it changes how the brain develops. Exposure to violence at a young age can alter neurons, the building blocks of the brain, negatively affecting capacity for emotional regulation, physical health, cognitive capacity, and behaviour control. Without a doubt, children who witness the severe beating of dogs in the markets and streets of Indonesia, highly charged traumatic events, would experience long-lasting adverse effects.”

A full statement from Dr. Randour is included as Appendix 1 to this letter.

3- Animal suffering:

The transport, handling and slaughter of thousands of dogs (and cats) each week causes immense animal suffering. Our investigations have documented the routine use of crude and brutal forms of handling and slaughter, including repeatedly bludgeoning animals over the

² www.dropbox.com/s/q76uvd72i5petjc/DMFI-b-roll.m4v?dl=1



head, killing animals in front of their terrified cage-mates, and blowtorching dogs whilst they are still alive. This cruel treatment of animals is conducted in full public view, including in front of children. There is a growing body of evidence to show a link between children observing brutality and cruelty to animals, and developing psychological disturbance, with potential long-term impacts on both individuals and society.

An additional concern is that we have observed the routine sale of at markets throughout the Province of a number of species of wildlife that are protected under Indonesian law. The sale of such species – including protected species of snakes and monkeys – is in breach of national legislation to protect threatened species of animals, and encourages illegal activity that is decimating wild populations and causing immense animal suffering.

4- International Reputation and Tourism

Indonesia's international reputation is being compromised by such obscene animal cruelty at these markets. As national and international concern for animals grows, by both the public and governments, so does condemnation of animal cruelty and exploitation. Indonesia relies heavily on tourists from around the world who care deeply about animal welfare, and this abhorrent and explicit disregard for animals is unacceptable in the global community and risks seriously jeopardizing tourism to North Sulawesi and Indonesia.

Whilst no country in the world today has legalised the dog meat trade, a growing number of countries in the region are explicitly banning the trade in dogs and consumption of dog meat on both animal welfare grounds and on those of public health and safety.

On behalf of the millions of supporters represented globally by our organisations, we thereby urge you to take immediate action to address these concerns. The Dog Meat Free-Indonesia Coalition is prepared to assist and support the government to enforce and strengthen existing laws and regulations that are in place to protect public health and safety and animal welfare.

We look forward to hearing your response regarding this urgent matter and would like to meet with you to discuss an action plan in detail.

Sent on behalf of the Dog Meat Free Indonesia Coalition





Please respond to Lola Webber, Dog Meat-Free Indonesia Coordinator, Lolawebber@change4animals.org; Karin Franken, Jakarta Animal Aid Network, jaan_adopt@yahoo.com

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Appendix 1: Full statement from Dr. Randour: “Exposure to Violence and a Child’s Brain”

Children can be exposed to cruelty in a number of ways—in the home, at school, through media consumption, or even in their own communities. Recently, the Dog Meat Free Indonesia coalition revealed that children in Indonesia are often subjected to the violent slaughtering of dogs in public markets. Because children begin to develop empathy as early as their first year, and very young children are able to recognize distress in others, witnessing such events can be incredibly traumatic.

There is no scientific doubt that children who witness violence suffer negative consequences, and these consequences are immediate and potentially long-term. The immediate consequences of witnessing or being exposed to violence can include anxiety, withdrawal, unexpected aggressive behavior, and other changes in personality. These are all changes that manifest themselves in behaviors observable to the human eye.

However, when children are exposed to cruelty and violence, there also can be unseen—and much more permanent—long-term effects. Witnessing violence can have dire negative consequences for the way in which a child’s brain develops—it induces actual physical changes in a child’s brain.

Neurons are the building blocks of the brain, creating interlocking systems and organizing those systems into increasing levels of complexity. The development of these systems is sequential, meaning prior events can disrupt ongoing development. Trauma—that is, witnessing or experiencing violence such as the slaughter of dogs—can interfere with the brain’s development. Neural pathways needed for adaptive behavior are compromised, which can lead to disrupted attachment, cognitive delays, and impaired emotional regulation.



Trauma can also reduce the length of telomeres—essential components of human cells that affect how our cells age. Premature cellular aging produces health problems, such as increased cardiovascular risk, elevated risks for mental health disorders, and shorter life expectancy. The negative biological and psychological effects created by trauma often are passed on to the next generation. Traumatized children grow up, become parents, and have children who suffer deficits in health and psychological well-being.

The current practice of dog slaughter in Indonesia undoubtedly harms any child who is exposed to this cruelty. As supported heavily by scientific evidence, witnessing trauma has damaging impacts on development of a child's brain and later physical and psychological health. This practice needs to be immediately terminated for the sake of the children of Indonesia.

Mary Lou Randour, Ph.D.
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