



Horrific animal abuse video reveals Tomohon markets defying Indonesia's pledge to end dog and cat meat trade

Campaigners urge Indonesian government to keep its promise to ban the cruelty

WARNING: This content includes graphic descriptions of animals being killed

JAKARTA (5th September 2018) – Shocking new footage of dogs and cats being bludgeoned over the head and blow-torched whilst still alive at an 'extreme' market in Indonesia's North Sulawesi province has prompted campaigners from the Dog Meat-Free Indonesia coalition to urge the Indonesian government to keep its promise to ban the islands' brutal dog and cat meat trade. The DMFI comprises local and international groups Animal Friends Jogja, Jakarta Animal Aid Network, Change For Animals Foundation, Humane Society International, Animals Asia Foundation and Four Paws.

The treatment of animals filmed by DMFI is not only extremely brutal, but also flouts public health and safety regulations designed to protect citizens from deadly rabies transmission and the spread of zoonotic diseases. Despite the national government's Director of Veterinary Public Health, Mr Syamsul Ma'arif, making a groundbreaking and progressive public pledge last month to end the trade which he called "torture for animals", DMFI's new footage shows that thousands of dogs and cats are continuing to be slaughtered at markets in Tomohon, North Sulawesi every week and the meat sold for human consumption.

Lola Webber for Dog Meat-Free Indonesia, said *"Every single dog and cat we saw at Tomohon extreme market was blowtorched whilst clearly still alive. It was the most horrific cruelty we have witnessed so far in our campaign to shut down this hideous trade, and it was all done in full view of very young children. By the end of our filming we were all spattered with blood and brain matter from the bludgeoning, showing how easy it would be for customers and tourists to become infected with diseases such as rabies, and in fact two of our team were extremely sick following the market visit. We are really grateful that the horrific cruelty and human-health risks of this appalling trade has been publicly recognized by the Indonesian government, but our latest evidence clearly shows the need for an immediate ban cannot be ignored. This is an urgent situation requiring immediate action."*

Since its first in-depth investigations in December 2017, DMFI has gathered alarming evidence of animal cruelty and violent dog and cat theft which it has submitted to both central and provincial governments, including North Sulawesi. This sparked both national and global outcry including a letter to President Joko Widodo calling for a ban. More than 90 Indonesian and international celebrities such as Cameron Diaz, Chelsea Islan, Dr Jane Goodall, Simon Cowell and Ellen DeGeneres signed the letter. DMFI's global petition has also been signed by over 940,000 people from around the world.



In February this year, officials from the Mayor of Tomohon's office met with DMFI representatives and pledged to end the sale and slaughter of dogs and cats at Tomohon market and to work with the coalition to promote respect for animal welfare with the aim of ending the dog and cat meat trade in the city. However, DMFI's latest video shows that it is business as usual at these barbaric markets.

There is increasing concern among Indonesian citizens at this lack of action. Law enforcement officials are failing to deter or punish gangs of thieves who terrorise neighbourhoods and steal dogs and cats from back yards and houses. Jakarta Animal Aid Network says it receives countless reports each week from devastated pet owners who have had their dogs stolen by armed dog thieves.

The dog and cat meat trades in Indonesia also operate in breach of disease control regulations put in place to curb the spread of fatal zoonotic diseases such as rabies, despite the government's pledge to eliminate the disease by 2020. Rabies is endemic in 25 out of 34 of Indonesia's provinces, and dogs and cats of unknown disease status are routinely transported across provincial borders and islands and into densely-populated cities. This is in clear breach of the law, and threatens those cities and provinces, including Jakarta, that have worked so hard to secure their rabies-free status.

DMFI's Dr. Katherine Polak says: *"As long as the dog and cat meat markets in North Sulawesi continue to drive the illegal trans-provincial trade into densely-populated cities, any attempts by Indonesia to secure its rabies-free status will fail. Millions of Indonesian citizens and global tourists could be at risk of exposure to diseases. It only takes one lick, scratch or bite from a rabies-infected animal to require prophylactic treatment for rabies which is otherwise a fatal disease."*

Download broadcast quality video footage from Tomohon market

here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5ndl5u135qmlpd8/AACl1ripqCxpIj7ZIVokafLYa?dl=0>

Download high resolution photos from Tomohon market here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/0mw8n0dmrdv24pa/AACcljelE9nKp9HaCZZt4agga?dl=0>

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Notes

The national government's pledge to ban the dog and cat meat trade came at a "National Coordination of Animal Welfare" meeting in Jakarta held on August 1st and 2nd by the Directorate of Veterinary Public and attended by national and regional government representatives including the livestock and animal health departments, animal quarantine agencies, veterinary faculty academics, the Indonesian Veterinary Medical Association. At the close of the meeting, all national participants agreed to issue a ban on the trade of dog and cat meat in Indonesia and to prohibit the issuance of health certification for dog and cat meat for human consumption.

Mr Syamsul Ma'arif, Director of Veterinary Public Health, warned of the impacts the dog meat trade is having on animal welfare and described the trade as "torture for animals" after reviewing DMFI's investigation footage. He also cited the risk the trade poses to Indonesia's international reputation, warning that "foreign countries find a low standard of animal welfare and cruelty unacceptable and will stop visiting Indonesia which is very bad for our tourism." He added that "dog meat or any animal that is not registered as farm animals, is illegal" and that the way in which the dogs were handled and transported alone were a violation of animal welfare and must be stopped.