



We, the undersigned organisations, affirm here our grave concerns regarding the decision by the Government of the Faroe Islands to continue and further institutionalise the hunting of Atlantic white-sided dolphins

Background

In September 2021, hunters in the Faroe Islands killed an unprecedented 1,423 Atlantic white-sided dolphins in a single drive hunt. This brought condemnation from all around the world, including a strongly worded statement of concern from the EU members of the International Whaling Commission (with the exception of Denmark) [1]. Many people in the Faroe Islands also expressed their concern regarding the numbers of dolphins killed and the manner in which the hunt was conducted. The government of the Faroe Islands responded by saying that they would undertake a review of dolphin hunting in the islands. On July 10th, 2022, 10 months after the hunt took place, the Ministry of Fisheries stated:

“An annual catch limit of 500 white-sided dolphins has now been proposed by the Ministry of Fisheries on a provisional basis for 2022 and 2023. This measure is based on recommendations from the evaluation of dolphin catches in the Faroe Islands carried out by the Government in response to the unusually large catch of 1423 white-sided dolphins which took place in the bay of Skálaþjórður on 12 September last year. The proposal was put forward for public comment on 8 July and is expected to be implemented as an executive order by 25 July.”

No report of the process of evaluation has been published and so it is unclear why or on what basis the Ministry came to this conclusion and selected this number. We request that this information is shared.

We are gravely disappointed with these developments and in particular that the Government of the Faroe Islands is enshrining the killing of large numbers of dolphins in law. Since the dolphin slaughter in September last year, the government has had the opportunity to rethink its relationship with dolphins and pilot whales and listen to the majority of Faroese voices. Instead, by setting quotas that far exceed average hunts [3], it has legitimised and incentivised the killing of dolphins. We fear that the new limits may be viewed as targets.

This endorsement of dolphin killing does not reflect public opinion in the Faroe Islands. Several polls show that more than 50% of people in the islands oppose the hunt.

Similarly, the Faroese aquaculture industry is concerned about the continuation of dolphin hunting.

These animals do not belong to any one nation, and we continue to call for an end to the killing of cetaceans in the Faroe Islands – it meets no pressing human needs, is a major welfare concern, and challenges the conservation actions being taken in the EU and other neighbouring countries.

Additionally, we note that at the recent Scientific Committee meeting of the International Whaling Commission, concerns were raised over the high number of Atlantic white-sided dolphins taken in 2021, and the Committee reiterated its longstanding recommendation that no small cetacean removals (live capture or directed harvest) should be authorised until a full assessment of status has been made.

We call on all concerned parties to address this development in the Faroes islands and ask them to cease the killing.

[1] IWC.CCG.1488. see <https://archive.iwc.int/pages/view.php?ref=19399&k=>

[2] <https://kvf.fo/greinar/2022/07/12/grindaformenn-skulu-kunna-lysa-grindabann>

[3] 2012 – 0; 2013 - 430 dolphins killed in Hvalba.; 2014 – 0; 2015 – 0; 2016 – 0; 2017 - 488 dolphins killed (Skala, Hvalvik, Vagar, Hvannasund, Funningfjord & Sydurgøta); 2018 - 256 dolphins (Husavik, Hvalvik, Hvannasund); 2019 - 8 dolphins killed (Midvágur, Skala); 2020 - 35 dolphins Hvalba; 2021 - 1,423 dolphins Skala

Signatories:

Animal Welfare Institute
Environmental Investigation Agency
Humane Society International
Oceanic Preservation Society
ORCA
Pro Wildlife
Whale and Dolphin Conservation