

Global Justice for Animals and the Environment

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Media Advisory

Photo Opportunity! Photo Opportunity!

Karnataka Animal Advocates to Canada: Ban Your Seal Hunt and Drop Your WTO Challenge or Find a New Name! Protest is Part of Worldwide Fur Free Friday and WTO Turnaround Week of Action

Who: Members of Global Justice for Animals and the Environment, an international organization dedicated to opposing free trade policies that violate the rights of animals and indigenous communities and harm the environment.

What: Bangalorean animal advocates will hold a demonstration at the Canadian Tourism office, demanding that Canada either drop its WTO challenge to the European Union seal product ban or choose a new name that sounds less like “Kannada.” At the protest, passersby will be encouraged to suggest new names for Canada that better reflect the nation's steadfast commitment to slaughtering baby animals despite the condemnation of compassionate people around the world.

When: Friday, November 27th, 2009 at 8:30- 9:30am

Where: in front of the Trade Office of Canada at 10, Prestige Meridian 1,2 MG road, Bangalore.

Why: Karnataka animal advocates are outraged that earlier this month Canada and Norway brought a World Trade Organization challenge against the European Union's ban on seal products, ratified in May. By contrast, President Vladimir Putin Russia responded to the EU measure by ending seal hunting in Russia.

In 2009, 72,000 harp seals as young as 12 days of age were bludgeoned or shot to death. Beginning at 12 days of age, the seals are clubbed (often with illegal weapons), hooked in the eye, cheek, or mouth to avoid damaging the fur, and are at times skinned alive because of the carelessness of the hunter. In some areas, seals are shot. For every seal landed, another is shot and lost under the ice. Activists believe that the hunt is gradually pushing seals to the brink of extinction as overhunting exacerbates a population already in decline as global warming melts the ice floes where seal normally brood. A total of 30 countries have now banned the sale of seal products, including 7 of Canada's top 10 export markets. In anticipation of the EU ban, pelt prices plummeted and many hunters stayed home. As a direct result, the total number of seals killed fell from 217, 857 to 72,000 in 2009, despite the ban not taking effect until 2010.

The protest is held as part of Worldwide Fur Free Friday, a day of action against the cruelty of the fur trade observed in 21 countries, and WTO Turnaround Week of Action, a week of protests and educational events celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Seattle WTO protests and protesting the WTO meeting beginning in Geneva on November 30. Actions at consulates in cities including New York, NY and Tucson, Arizona are also addressing Canada and Norway's WTO seal hunt challenge. Since the 1990s, nations seeking to undermine animal protection in pursuit of profit have gone to the WTO and its predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. In some cases even the threat of a WTO challenge was sufficient to pressure nations to drop animal protective measures. In the 90s, Canada and the US threatened a WTO challenge against the EU's wild fur ban, leading the EU to drop the ban before it was ever enacted. Actual and threatened WTO and GATT challenges have also led to the elimination of laws to protect dolphins from being killed in tuna nets and sea turtles from being killed in shrimp nets.

“According to Global Justice for Animals and the Environment's Sowmya Reddy, “While Canada and Kannada are pronounced very differently, to non-Indians they sound similar and are very easy to confuse. Kannada's 38 million speakers don't want to be confused with a national that bludgeons defenseless baby seals to death. It's time for Canada to stop humiliating its namesake and abolish the barbaric seal hunt. Otherwise, Canada needs to find a more appropriate name – perhaps Brutalia? Tortureland? We're pretty sure Sadistica isn't taken...”

Additional information is available at <http://freetradekillsanimals.org/?page=SealMedia>.