

NGO Thematic Report Informing on Compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Kingdom of Morocco

December 2023

Violent Government Enacted or Condoned Societal Animal Abuse Practices Witnessed by Children UNCRC Art 19 UN General Comment 26 Art 35

Summary

The following report is presented by European Link Coalition in collaboration with other organisations. Attention has been drawn by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child about the existence of activities involving children and adolescents below the age of 18 (hereinafter children) that violate a nation's obligations under the Convention. It was created to 'inform and invite' Moroccan government agencies of the 'strict obligations' placed on State Parties by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was created also to inform UNICEF Maroc of the imperative to support the UN Convention. Responses from these agencies will be included in a final report for submission to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The UN Committee has responded to the 'Harmful Effects' caused to children witnessing violent animal abuse in bullfighting by advising nations where this takes place, to ensure that children are not exposed to these practices. The Committee has formally declared to "Increase efforts to change violent traditions and practices that negatively affect the well-being of children (...)".

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has included an express statement regarding the violation of the rights of people under 18 years old in the formulation of the Concluding Observations of the following countries regarding witnessing bullfighting: Portugal (2014 and September 2019),^[1] Colombia (February 2015)^[2], Mexico (June 2015)^[3], Peru (February 2016)^[4], France (February 2016)^[5], Ecuador (October 2017)^[6] and Spain (February 2018)^[7], identifying harmful effects to children participating & witnessing violent animal abuse.

These issues were raised as Concluding Observations to the State Parties of Tunisia and Azerbaijan, to prevent children from exposure to societal animal abuse. This had been an expansion of the Committees recommendation that children should not be exposed to bullfighting because of 'Harmful Effects' caused to the child. Implicit in these recommendations is acknowledgement of a child's empathetic connection with fellow sentient beings, independent of species with empathy erosion and violence normalisation occurring from such violence exposure.

During the 94th Session of the Committee, UN General Comment 26 was launched. UN General Comment 26 [8] explicitly places a 'strict obligation' on States Parties by mandating that ' Children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals' (GC26 G35)

[1] https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2FPRT%2FCO%2F5-6&Lang=en

[2] http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/COL/CO/4-5&Lang=Sp

[3] http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2FMEX%2FCO%2F4-5

[4] http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/PER/CO/4-5&Lang=En

[5] http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2FFRA%2FCO%2F5&Lang=en

[6] http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2FECU%2FCO%2F5-6&Lang=en

[7] http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2FESP%2FCO%2F5-6&Lang=en

[8] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-26-2023-childrens-rights-and>

The following information in the Index, collectively provides a comprehensive overview of core themes & supportive evidence.

Index

1. Violent Government Homeless Animal Control Practices Witnessed by Children: policies, evidence-base information and key concerns
2. Violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and General comments: articles 3, 6, 19.1 and 27.1.
3. Domain unification of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with UN Sustainable Development Goals
4. Children's Right to Be Heard (article 12)
5. Recommendations
6. Academic Study Papers

1. Violent Government Homeless Animal Control Practices Witnessed by Children: policies, evidence-base information and key concerns

In many countries the preferred practice of managing homeless animal populations is conducted by shooting or poisoning the animals.

A subsequent study conducted by Teesside University, UK (Plant et al,2016) explored the effects of violent practices against animals, witnessed by children in societies where homeless animal populations are subject to management by killing with violent practices.

The effects were the same as identified in exposure to bullfighting but on a significantly greater scale exercising this practice in public and witnessed by children (Ladny R.T & Meyer,L (2019). Violent government activity invites a normalisation of violence (Thompson K.L & Gullone. E. (2006)

Passivity allows uncontrolled numbers of homeless animal populations with attendant social status diminishment, encouraging societal violence against animals, again witnessed by children.

Violent Animal Abuse Practices & the Children – VIDEO: **Click on this image** to view an extended video of violent animal abuse practices. It should be noted that the video contains harrowing scenes & for child protection professionals unable to continue viewing, please consider that the children have no such choice & are often exposed daily to such practices.



It should be noted that although these practices may be a nocturnal activity, the children are affected by hearing the sounds of violence, can

witness this from their windows & also see animals dying on the streets after only being severely wounded.

It should also be noted that eradication practices promote social stigmatization of the animals which encourages a normalization of violence against animals & which is evidenced to also potentially be enacted in the human domain, typically with domestic violence & child abuse..

This could all be prevented by a humane dog population management program, driven by a national action plan and centred on reproduction control alongside other measures, as stated in the World Animal Health Organization (WOAH) standard on dog population management without compromise of animal welfare (TAHC Chapter 7.7) and reflected in the position paper of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE). Such programs provide strength to mass dog vaccination for effective rabies control; as stated by the World Health Organization (WHO), culling has no part to play in rabies control and is “ineffective and may be counterproductive to vaccination programmes, particularly when they target free-roaming dogs” (WHO TRS 1012 Expert Consultation on rabies, 2018).

[1] https://www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahm/pdf/2.01.13_RABIES.pdf

[2] <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-TRS-1012>

[3] https://uevp.fve.org/working_documents/the-veterinary-vision-on-stray-dog-management/

UNCRC Concluding Observations

‘Evaluate and eliminate, on the basis of the procedure and criteria described above, practices, policies and services that may not be in the best interests of the child, including those relating to societal violence against animals’ CRC/C/TUN/CO/4-6 Tunisia

‘Eliminate violent traditions and practices, such as shooting dogs in public, and raise awareness among State officials, the media and the public about the negative effects on children of the exposure to such practices’ CRC/C/AZE/CO/5-6 Azerbaijan

2. Violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and General Comments: Articles 3, 6, 12, 19.1 and 27.1.

The situation in many countries in relation to children and violent animal abuse practices violates the following articles of the Convention:

- General principles: articles 3 and 6

Protection and care of well-being of children and best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

GENERAL COMMENT no. 5 (2003) general measures of implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. "Article 3, paragraph 1 -In all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration.

According to Concluding observations (2010) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child CRC/C/TUN/CO/3(32), Committee concerns about the views of children not being sufficiently taken into account and respected.

- Civil rights and liberties: article 19.1

State Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence.

The State Party has not taken appropriate steps to protect children from the mental harm of abuse caused by children being exposed to violent homeless animal management practices.

According to Concluding observations (2010) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child CRC/C/TUN/CO/3 (42), the Committee encourages the State party to prioritize the elimination of all forms of violence against children and recommends that the State party pay particular attention to prohibit all forms of violence against children and use the recommendations of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children as a tool for action in partnership with civil society and, in particular, with the involvement of children to ensure that all children are protected from all forms of psychological violence and to gain momentum for concrete and time-bound actions to prevent and respond to such violence and abuse.

- Wellbeing and basic health: article 27.1

Article 27. 1. The State Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

Recognition of the right included in article 27.1 is violated when dealing with public animal killing, as the mental, spiritual and moral development of children is severely compromised by the experience linked to the activity and to traumatic consequences and after-effects of viewing such an event. These aftereffects include an habituation of violence, traumatic effects, moral desensitization and disturbance of values.

Similarly, the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations on "Children's Rights" A/RES/61/146, of 19 December 2006 condemned all forms of violence against children and urges States to take effective legislative and other measures to prevent and eliminate violence in all its forms (physical, mental and psychological).

Thus, the State Party has not adopted the necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure children such protection and care as is necessary for their wellbeing and to protect against mental abuse in public places.

The physical, mental, spiritual and moral development of children is severely compromised by the danger linked to the activity and to traumatic consequences and after-effects of viewing such events. Witnessing public killing of sentient beings often befriended by the children does not foster the development of those educational values incumbent on the State Parties.

The Committee has already declared its position on the exposure of children to violent animal abuse with UN General Comment 26 providing authoritative guidance with '*Children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals*'

Various psychological studies on violence and animal abuse have shown that witnessing or participating in the violence inherent in bullfights and witnessing public violence against homeless animals can have the following negative impacts on children:

Traumatic effects on children, who cannot freely express their feelings in an environment shaped by adults. A child's normal reaction to the sight of an animal bleeding as a result of human violence is always, on principle, one of rejection, distress, and fear. Progressive desensitization with an erosion of affective empathy & progressive normalisation of violence from traumatization potentially life-affecting, are among identified results (Merz-Perez, L., Heide, K. M., & Silverman, I. J. (2001).

Habituation to violence occurs if we show them that gratuitous violence can be acceptable and even recommendable. Witnessing the mistreatment of animals perpetuates the cycle of violence by desensitization and imitation of behaviours, especially among people who are at an age when they are learning and being taught. As a result, significant evidence exists showing that youths who repeatedly witness the mistreatment of animals might be more susceptible to "learning" to use violence in their personal relationships (Wright, J., & Hensley, C. (2003), Murrell, A. R. Merwin, R. M., Christoff, K. A., & Henning, K. R. (2005), Daly, B., & Morton, L. L. (2008), Buka, S. L., Stichick, T. L., Birdthistle, I., & Earls, F. J. (2001).

Confusion of values because the child's opinion of what is fair and unfair is destabilized. Public killing of innocent domesticated animals is the negation of what children understand a value to be. Children's ability to feel empathy is not only limited to human beings; they can also feel it for animals. This is based on the concept of biophilia - the innate emotional bond that humans have towards other living creatures - a predisposition that is particularly strong in children. Killing animals also runs contrary to law - and children know that mistreatment of animals is punishable by law in many countries.

Weakening of the moral compass at a time when children need to find role models to identify with. Children, anxious to preserve the image of their parents and to avoid conflicts of loyalty, have no option but to deny the brutality they have witnessed and to hide all feelings of compassion towards the animal victim. A progressive desensitization process ensues

with an erosion of affective empathy and a normalisation of violence which can then be taken into the child's adult world and enacted against people and property. A Cycle of Abuse can be created which results in an increased likelihood of child safeguarding issues and domestic violence. All forms of public violence against animals can cause 'Harmful Effects' to the observing child whether these practices include shooting, poisoning or violent removal for later slaughter.

40 years of research has provided academic resilience to the 'link' between animal abuse & its associations in the human domain. This now informs many authorities including the FBI (USA) and College of Policing (UK).

Children exposed to violent practices suffer sometimes life changing effects. Effects include empathy erosion & a normalisation of violence.

3. Domain Unification of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with UN Sustainable Development Goals

Following a body of research into the effects on children exposed to violent animal abuse traditions & practices, a resultant report was submitted to the UNCRC. During the 87th Session of the Committee these issues were raised as a recommendation to the authorities of Tunisia, to prevent children from exposure to societal animal abuse. This had been an expansion of the Committees recommendation that children should not be exposed to bullfighting because of 'Harmful Effects' caused to the child.

Significant research conducted over decades also attests to effects on children exposed to violent practices. These can include erosion of empathy & a normalisation of violence which is often taken into adulthood & enacted in the form of domestic violence & child abuse. Effects are caused to the child exposed to violent animal abuse because of a child's empathic engagement with the sentience of the animal.

Relating the UN Committee recommendations for 2030 Agenda & each relevant SDG :-

Agenda Point 8 ' children growing up free from violence ' Concerns of the UN Committee was that children can normalise violence by experiencing violent animal abuse. UN Convention Articles 3, 6, 19 & 27

UN General Comment 26 Section G35: states that:

‘Children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals.’

Agenda Point 9 Envisage a world where ...humanity lives in harmony with nature & in which wildlife & other living species are protected’
UN General Comment 26 states ‘The developmental benefits of a healthy environment include those linked to opportunities to experience outdoor activities and to interact with and play in natural environments, including the animal world.’ - GC26 Section C para 23

SDG 3 UNCRC concerns about the mental health of children exposed to violent practices against homeless animals. UN Convention Article 19 ‘to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence’

SDG 4 Quality Education UNCRC Article 27 & 29 ‘a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development’

SDG 15 Life on Land. Recognition that empathic connection with other sentient beings is a natural human function & one which can be eroded by exposure to external influences.

SDG 16 Perception of injustice to fellow sentient beings. UNCRC Article 29.

SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

Protection of children from experiencing violent practices against homeless animals requires a partnership solution to humanely remove animal numbers from the streets. The sole solution is a WHO, OIE & FVE recommended national neutering program. UNDP had already engaged with such a program in Bosnia even before learning of the human impact & the recommendations of UNCRC.

4. Children's Right to Be Heard

Article 12 1. State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Children Expressing Their Feelings -VIDEO: **Click on this image to view a short video which includes** children expressing their feelings about having to see violent public animal abuse practices.



5. Concluding Recommendations

European Link Coalition makes the following recommendations in order that State Parties meet their obligations pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and General Comment 26 'Children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals' :

That State Parties adopt the appropriate legislative or administrative humane measures to prevent children from being exposed to the violent killing of animals witnessed by children & violent government homeless animal management policies which encourage societal violence against animals..

Violent government homeless animal management practices are both historically proven to be unsuccessful but also unnecessary. WHO, WOAHA & FVE all advise national neutering programs as the ONLY effective solution. Introduction of a national neutering program to humanely reduce homeless animal populations. Attendant reduction of violence and inhibition of transmission of rabies.

That UNICEF Maroc, in compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child General Comment 26, seek to ensure protection of children from experiencing violent animal abuse by informing and inviting responses from government agencies to cease all violent animal abuse practices which can affect the children.

Recognition of empathic regard for fellow sentient beings as a natural human function & a commitment to reduce speciesism as an unnatural division.

Embracing these issues with recognition of natural empathetic connections with sentient animals within Goal 15 'Life on Land' of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, UNSDG <https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/morocco> provides support to these programs.

6. Academic Study Papers

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Kingdom of Morocco

December 2023

Violent Government Enacted or Condoned Animal Abuse Traditions & Practices Witnessed by Children UNCRC Art 19 UN GC26 Art 35

- **The Moroccan State Party has not adopted the necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure children such protection and care as is necessary for their wellbeing and to protect against mental abuse in public places.**
- UN General Comment 26 explicitly places a 'strict obligation' on States Parties by mandating that ' Children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals' (GC26 G35)
- Violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and General Comments: Articles 3, 6, 12, 19.1 and 27.1.
- Concluding Observations recommendations made to the following countries, identifying 'harmful effects' to children participating & witnessing violent practices in bullfighting: Portugal (2014 and September 2019), Colombia (February 2015) Mexico (June 2015), Peru (February 2016), France (February 2016), Ecuador (October 2017) and Spain (February 2018).
- The UN Committee has responded to the 'Harmful Effects' caused to children witnessing violent animal abuse in bullfighting to advise nations where this takes place to ensure that children are not exposed to these practices. The Committee has formally declared to "Increase efforts to change violent traditions and practices that negatively affect the well-being of children (...)".
- Concluding Observations to the State Parties of Tunisia and Azerbaijan, to prevent children from exposure to societal animal abuse. This had been an expansion of the Committees recommendation that children should not be exposed to bullfighting because of 'Harmful Effects' caused to the child. Implicit in these recommendations is acknowledgement of a child's empathetic connection with fellow sentient beings, independent of species
- Violent homeless animal management programs which have been identified as being ineffective MUST be replaced with humane non-violent programs.. National neutering programs are recommended by World Animal Health Organisation (WOAH) , [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO) (as also effective in rabies control) and Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, (FVE) as the ONLY effective homeless animal management practice.

Rapport Thématique des ONG Informant sur le Respect de la Convention des Nations Unies Relative aux Droits de L'enfant

Royaume du Maroc

Décembre 2023

Un gouvernement violent promulgué ou toléré les traditions et pratiques de maltraitance des animaux dont sont témoins les enfants CDE, Art 19, CG26 de l'ONU, Art 35

- L'État partie marocain n'a pas adopté les mesures législatives et administratives nécessaires pour assurer aux enfants la protection et les soins nécessaires à leur bien-être et pour les protéger contre la maltraitance mentale dans les lieux publics.
- L'Observation générale 26 de l'ONU impose explicitement une « obligation stricte » aux États parties en exigeant que « les enfants doivent être protégés de toutes les formes de violence physique et psychologique et de l'exposition à la violence, telle que la violence domestique ou la violence infligée aux animaux » (GC26 G35).)
- Violation de la Convention des Nations Unies relative aux droits de l'enfant et commentaires généraux : articles 3, 6, 12, 19.1 et 27.1.
- Recommandations d'observations finales adressées aux pays suivants, identifiant les effets néfastes sur les enfants participant et témoins de pratiques violentes dans la corrida : Portugal (2014 et septembre 2019), Colombie (février 2015), Mexique (juin 2015), Pérou (février 2016), France (février 2016), l'Équateur (octobre 2017) et l'Espagne (février 2018).
- Le Comité des Nations Unies a répondu aux « effets nocifs » causés aux enfants témoins de violences contre les animaux lors des corridas afin d'informer les pays où cela a lieu afin de garantir que les enfants ne soient pas exposés à ces pratiques. Le Comité a officiellement déclaré « Augmenter les efforts pour changer les traditions et pratiques violentes qui affectent négativement le bien-être des enfants (...) ».
- Observations finales aux États parties de Tunisie et d'Azerbaïdjan, pour empêcher les enfants d'être exposés à la maltraitance sociétale des animaux. Il s'agissait d'un élargissement de la recommandation du comité selon laquelle les enfants ne devraient pas être exposés à la corrida en raison des « effets nocifs » causés à l'enfant. Ces recommandations reconnaissent implicitement le lien empathique de l'enfant avec ses semblables, indépendamment de l'espèce.

Les programmes violents de gestion des animaux sans abri qui ont été identifiés comme inefficaces DOIVENT être remplacés par des programmes humains et non violents. Les programmes nationaux de stérilisation sont recommandés par l'Organisation mondiale de la santé animale (WOAH), l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS) (également efficaces dans lutte contre la rage) et la Fédération des Vétérinaires d'Europe (FVE) comme SEULE pratique efficace de gestion des animaux sans abri.

قرير مواضيعي للمنظمات غير الحكومية للإبلاغ عن الامتثال لاتفاقية الأمم المتحدة لحقوق الطفل

المملكة المغربية

ديسمبر 2023

الحكومة العنيفة التي سنت أو تغاضت عن تقاليد وممارسات إساءة معاملة الحيوانات التي يشهدها الأطفال

اتفاقية حقوق الطفل، المادة 19، قرار مجلس الأمن رقم 26، المادة 35

لم تعتمد الدولة الطرف المغربية التدابير التشريعية والإدارية اللازمة لضمان الحماية والرعاية اللازمة للأطفال • لرفاهيتهم والحماية من الاعتداء العقلي في الأماكن العامة

يضع تعليق الأمم المتحدة العام رقم 26 صراحةً "التزامًا صارمًا" على الدول الأطراف من خلال التفويض بأنه • يجب حماية الأطفال من جميع أشكال العنف الجسدي والنفسي ومن التعرض للعنف، مثل العنف المنزلي أو العنف الذي " (GC26 G35) "يمارس على الحيوانات

• انتهاك اتفاقية الأمم المتحدة لحقوق الطفل والتعليقات العامة: المواد 3 و6 و12 و19.1 و27.1

توصيات الملاحظات الختامية المقدمة إلى البلدان التالية، تحديد الآثار الضارة على الأطفال المشاركين والشاهدين على • ممارسات عنيفة في مصارعة الثيران: البرتغال (2014 وسبتمبر 2019)، كولومبيا (فبراير 2015) المكسيك (يونيو 2015) بيرو (فبراير 2016)، فرنسا (فبراير 2016)، والإكوادور (أكتوبر 2017)، وإسبانيا (فبراير 2018)، (2015)

• استجابت لجنة الأمم المتحدة لـ "الآثار الضارة" التي يتعرض لها الأطفال الذين يشهدون إساءة معاملة الحيوانات العنيفة في مصارعة الثيران لتقديم المشورة للدول التي يحدث فيها ذلك لضمان عدم تعرض الأطفال لهذه الممارسات " (...) وأعلنت اللجنة رسمياً عن "تكتيف الجهود لتغيير التقاليد والممارسات العنيفة التي تؤثر سلباً على سلامة الأطفال

• الملاحظات الختامية للدول الأطراف في تونس وأذربيجان، لمنع الأطفال من التعرض لإساءة معاملة الحيوانات في المجتمع. كان هذا بمثابة توسيع لتوصية اللجنة بعدم تعريض الأطفال لمصارعة الثيران بسبب "الآثار الضارة" التي تحدث للطفل. تتضمن هذه التوصيات ضمنياً الاعتراف بعلاقة الطفل المتعاطفة مع زملائه من الكائنات الواعية، بغض النظر عن الأنواع

• برامج إدارة الحيوانات المشردة العنيفة التي تم تحديدها على أنها غير فعالة، يجب استبدالها ببرامج إنسانية غير عنيفة. برنامج • كما أنه (WHO) ومنظمة الصحة العالمية، (WOAH) الخصي الوطني موصى به من قبل منظمة الصحة العالمية العالمية باعتباره الممارسة الفعالة الوحيدة لإدارة الحيوانات (FVE) فعال أيضاً في مكافحة داء الكلب) واتحاد الأطباء البيطريين في أوروبا المشردة.