

Press Release

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Audit by European Commission shows animal welfare not met in Raša port

Following numerous complaints by NGOs, members of the EU Parliament and media reports, the European Commission carried out an audit* in Croatian port of Raša during September 2018 and released in 2019 the report showing a disaster for European animals being exported by vessels from here to the Middle East and to North Africa.

Investigative video and photos are available here: <https://animalsaustralia-media.org/uploads/EU-live-export/>

Raša is a small port but one of Europe's major exit points for live animals (mainly cattle). The port also trades wood and stones. In 2017, there were 2164 trucks of live animals - mostly cattle arriving in this port by road from Hungary, Croatia, Germany, Romania, Italy and the Czech Republic. The animals were loaded onto 78 vessels (mainly to Lebanon, Israel, Turkey and Iraq) under circumstances causing horrendous animal suffering breaching EU law as confirmed by the audit report of the Commission department responsible for Health and Food Safety.

“The system in place is insufficient to minimise the risks that can negatively affect the welfare of the animals that arrive at the port and that are transported further by sea.”

In four days, the uncoordinated arrival of 101 trucks has been observed when daytime temperature exceeded 30°C, the legal limit for animal transports. The report stresses that under these conditions, *“the loading of vehicles at departure should not have been carried out”*.

The conclusion on animal welfare during sea transport summarizes that the *“port veterinarians do not have the sufficient technical knowledge to perform a proper inspection of the livestock vessel and thus they do not assess effectively all the necessary elements.”*

In general, the auditors criticize that *“authorities do not detect weaknesses and mistakes in their controls and thus they cannot correct them, as there is no verification procedure to check the effectiveness of the official controls at the port which would allow them to take corrective measures.”*

„For many years the loading facilities in Raša have been very poor, posing risks to the animals health and welfare. The veterinary authorities are either not trained to supervise and inspect the operations during loading, or powerless. We believe there is effectively no independent monitoring or policing of this trade in Raša Port”, Iris Baumgärtner, Project manager Animal Welfare Foundation.

“The report only confirms that our findings for the past 4 years in this harbour are not isolated incidents but the routine at Raša. We have witnessed animals under immense heat stress arriving at the port waiting on the trucks in the beating sun for way too many hours before being loaded by force onto vessels. Workers have brutally kicked animals and loaded even those unfit for further transport right under the eyes of the official veterinarian. Inappropriate loading facilities made it possible that scared animals escaped and had to be forcefully moved on the vessel by untrained workers. Last August we took evidence of a barbaric scene when an unfit large bull was being lifted with a crane by one leg onto the vessel. This is absolutely illegal. Raša received its bad reputation in the international media 20 years ago when a similar scene took place. It is time to shut down

live export in this harbour. It brings nothing but bad reputation and pollution for Croatia”, Gabriel Paun, EU Director of Animals International says.

"We document the state of live animals arriving at the ports of Israel after their awful journeys from Raša and other EU ports. When they arrive, they are dirty, often covered in faeces and many are severely wounded. Some are barely a few weeks old, weak and cry out in the packed trucks. Their journey and suffering do not end at the port. They are transported to quarantines, feedlots and are later on slaughtered with barbaric methods that are illegal in the EU. We have documented the cruelty in each step of the live animals arrival process. This vile trade must end. We are pressing our politicians to ban live imports and urge the EU to help at their end.", says Yaron Lapidot, spokesperson at Israel Against Live Shipments.

*Audit report conducted by the European Commission in port of Raša: http://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit_reports/details.cfm?rep_id=4100

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