

Solomons seeks to prevent mass dolphin killings

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Photo illustration. The Solomon Islands on Friday urged villagers to stop the mass slaughter of dolphins, saying the traditional practice was damaging the Pacific nation's tourism industry.

The Solomon Islands on Friday urged villagers to stop the mass slaughter of dolphins, saying the traditional practice was damaging the Pacific nation's tourism industry.

Locals in the village of Fanalei killed about 750 dolphins last month,

saying they acted after US-based conservation group the Earth Island Institute failed to provide funds promised under a 2010 agreement to stop the cull.

Tourism Minister Samuel Manetoali declined to comment on the row between the villagers and the conservationists but said he wanted the killings to stop because they were harming the Solomons' [international reputation](#).

"This has given us so much bad press overseas it is impacting our [tourism market](#), especially from Australia and New Zealand," he told AFP, adding that he planned to travel to Fanalei for discussions with tribal chiefs.

Dolphin hunts are traditional in areas of the Solomons, where their teeth have long been used as a form of currency. In recent years, villagers have also captured live dolphins and exported them to marine entertainment parks.

"It's a sensitive issue as these people depend on this traditional practice but there are now modern expectations," Manetoali said.

"So whatever we discuss and agree to has to be a win-win situation for the country as a whole and the communities concerned."

He said the killings were "a big setback for tourism", which received a boost last September when Britain's [Prince William](#) and wife Catherine visited the Solomons on a trip marking Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee.

The Earth Island Institute has denied breaking its agreement with the villagers, blaming the killings on a "renegade" group of locals who were acting in defiance of tribal chiefs.

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