

Celebrities join battle to stop Faroe Islands dolphin 'grind'

August 3 2014, by Ariane Picard



The pilot whales are forced into a shallow bay before being hacked to death with hooks and knives, according to a local Faroe Island custom known as the "grind"

Celebrities and animal lovers from around the world are flocking to the Faroe Islands in a bid to stop a controversial dolphin hunt that activists describe as an "archaic mass slaughter".

Actress Pamela Anderson, who arrived on the remote North Atlantic archipelago in recent days, is set to be joined by 500 volunteers who will patrol the ocean and beaches around the islands to try to block the killing of [pilot whales](#), one of the largest members of the dolphin family.

Renowned ballet dancer Sylvie Guillem and sailor Florence Arthaud, both from France, are also taking part in the campaign led by environmental group Sea Shepherd.

"Operation GrindStop" aims to save more than 1,000 pilot whales, members of the dolphin family, from being slaughtered in a practice known locally as a "grind".

The method involves the mammals being forced into a bay by flotillas of small boats before being hacked to death with hooks and knives.

Many locals defend the hunt as a cultural right, but Sea Shepherd has denounced it as "a brutal and archaic mass slaughter".

Campaigners argue that while there was once a need for Faroe Islanders to hunt the whales for food, that need no longer exists.

"This is not for survival. There are very few things that happen like this that are so brutal," former Baywatch star Anderson said at a press conference on the islands on Friday, according to the Sea Shepherd website.

"We have to put this behind us and move on, and let the whales swim freely. And I think it's much more important for us in the future to save our oceans and the biodiversity of our oceans that the whales are very important to."

'The bloodiest months'

Rosie Kunneke, who is leading the campaign for Sea Shepherd, also called for an end to the practice.

"A culture and tradition that does not belong in the 21st century should be abolished," the South African said on group's website.

"I grew up in the 'culture' and 'tradition' of apartheid. We fought with the people outside against the government to change this."

Guillem, 49, widely recognised as one of the world's greatest ballet dancers, has been a supporter of Sea Shepherd for four years.

"With my reputation, I can help open people's minds," she told AFP.

"I think the solution will come from individuals, it is they who make the difference," she added.

She will arrive in the Faroe Islands, an autonomous country within Denmark, next week.

Sea Shepherd says its campaign will continue throughout what it says are "traditionally bloodiest months of the hunt season"—from June until October.

The group says on its website that its volunteers will use "direct action" to intervene in any hunt "using land, sea and air tactics."

Since records began, more than 265,000 small cetaceans have been killed in the Faroe Islands, mainly between the months of June and October, according to Sea Shepherd.

It says that 267 pilot whales were killed in one grind last year in the Faroese town of Fuglafjorour.

Whaling in the Faroes stretches back to the earliest Norse settlements more than 1,000 years ago, and community-organised hunts date to at least the 16th century.

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