

Norway kicks off minke hunt, raises quota to 999 whales

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Norway on Saturday kicked off its annual six-month whale hunting season with whalers allowed to kill an increased quota of 999 minke whales, up from 880 animals in 2016.

The International Whaling Commission imposed a commercial ban on whaling in 1986, but Norway objected. Norwegian officials estimate there are more than 100,000 North Atlantic minke whales—which are not an endangered species—off the long ragged western coast of Norway where the hunt takes place.

Despite the new kill quota, officials say that quota of whales has not been fully taken in recent years because demand is scant for whale meat and the industry has seen its numbers decrease because of retiring whalers. They say Norwegian whalers have killed between 30 and 60 percent of their quota in recent years.

Greenpeace called Norwegian whaling "a dying industry" and said it was wrong of Norway to violate international agreement. A documentary recently aired on Norway's public broadcaster NRK reported that most of the [minke whales](#) hunted in Norwegian waters are female and many are pregnant.

On Friday, Japan's whaling fleet returned home after killing 333 [whales](#) in the Antarctic, achieving its goal for the second year under a revised research whaling program.

The Fisheries Agency said the five-ship fleet finished its four-month expedition without major interference from anti-whaling activists.

The International Court of Justice ruled in 2014 that Japan's Antarctic whaling program should stop because it wasn't scientific as Tokyo had claimed. Japan conducted non-lethal whaling research in the Antarctic in 2015, and revised its program in 2016 by reducing the catch quota to about one-third of what it used to kill.

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