

Lebanon gets first animal protection law

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The trade of rare animals is big business in Lebanon

Lebanese President Michel Aoun on Tuesday signed the country's first animal welfare bill into law, guaranteeing that domestic and wild animals will be legally protected from abuse.

The bill is the culmination of years of lobbying for the protection of animals in the Mediterranean country, the Animals Lebanon NGO said.

The group's executive director Jason Mier said it was "a great day for

Lebanon" and its animals.

"With this law, Lebanon's regulations are as strict, if not stricter, than other laws in the region," he told AFP.

The law, passed by parliament on August 16, outlines requirements for keeping domestic pets, regulations for zoos and pet shops, and penalties for violations—including jail time and fines.

It also outlaws abusing pets or owning wild or endangered animals.

The trade of rare animals is big business in Lebanon, where prized tigers and lions are often locked in cramped cages, forced to perform in circuses, and paraded by wealthy individuals as status symbols.

But animals more traditionally kept as household pets—including cats, dogs, and rabbits—are also often subject to abuse by unregulated zoos, pet shops, and breeders in the country.

"When we used to monitor violations (in the past), we always felt that we didn't have a strong legal basis that we could lean on," Animals Lebanon's lawyer Rania Saghie told AFP.

"The importance of this law is that we can cover all institutions that care for and maintain animals," she said.

Other countries in the Middle East, including Tunisia and Qatar, also have animal welfare legislation, although enforcement continues to present a challenge.

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