

Japan whaling fleet returns from Antarctic

April 5 2014



This file handout photo taken on January 5, 2014 by Sea Shepherd Australia Ltd purportedly shows three dead minke whales on the deck of Japanese factory ship Nisshin Maru

A whaling fleet anchored at a Japanese port Saturday after Tokyo said it would cancel its annual hunt for the first time in more than 25 years to abide by a UN court ruling.

"The Nisshin Maru and two other whaling ships arrived here today after ending their mission," a port official said, following the fleet's planned

arrival at Shimonoseki port in western Japan.

Television footage showed workers unloading a number of boxes labelled as whale meat parts at the port, marking the end of the traditional whaling season.

On Thursday, Japan said it was cancelling its next annual Antarctic whaling hunt, due to begin late 2014, for the first time in a quarter-century.

A "deeply disappointed" Tokyo said it would honour the judgement by the United Nations' Hague-based International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling that the programme was a commercial activity disguised as science.

During the four-month voyage, the harpoon fleet faced its annual confrontation with [environmental activist group](#) Sea Shepherd in the Antarctic Sea.

Australia, backed by New Zealand, hauled Japan before the ICJ in 2010 in a bid to end the annual Southern Ocean hunt.

Tokyo has used a legal loophole in the 1986 whaling ban that allowed it to continue slaughtering the mammals, ostensibly so it could gather scientific data.

However, it has never made a secret of the fact that the [whale meat](#) from these hunts often ends up on dining tables.

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Citation: Japan whaling fleet returns from Antarctic (2014, April 5) retrieved 21 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-04-japan-whaling-fleet-antarctic.html>

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