

Japan court orders dolphin-hunt town to pay damages to Australian

March 25 2016



Dolphin activist Ric O'Barry—the central character in "The Cove"—visits the Japanese town of Taiji in 2010

An anti-dolphin hunting activist is being paid damages by a Japanese town made notorious by the Oscar-winning film "The Cove," after it refused to let her into its aquarium.

Sarah Lucas, CEO of Australia for Dolphins, two years ago tried to enter

a whaling museum in Taiji which keeps [whales](#) and dolphins, but was rejected after museum officials said those opposed to whaling cannot enter, news reports said.

Taiji, a small port town in western Japan's Wakayama prefecture, was thrust into the global spotlight after the Oscar-winning 2009 documentary "The Cove" depicted dolphin slaughter in the area, where some of the animals are also captured and sold to aquariums including the whaling museum.

Lucas said her purpose to visit the facility was to check on the condition of a rare albino dolphin calf named Angel, which her group says is a worldwide symbol for the controversial dolphin catch.

The Wakayama District Court ordered Taiji to pay 110,000 yen (\$972) in compensation to Lucas, who had demanded 3.3 million, a court official said, without providing further details.

"Today's decision shows Japanese law can be used to stop animal suffering," Lucas said in a statement released by the pro-dolphin group.

"This is not just good news for Angel, but a sign of hope for the thousands of dolphins brutally slaughtered in Taiji every year."

In the annual hunt, people from the southwestern town corral hundreds of dolphins into a secluded bay and butcher them, turning the water crimson red.

Environmental campaigners visit the town every year during the gruesome event. Authorities have boosted their presence to prevent any clashes between locals and activists.

The scene was featured in "The Cove" documentary, drawing unwanted

attention to the little coastal community.

Defenders of the hunt say it is a tradition and point out that the animals are not endangered, a position echoed by the Japanese government.

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Citation: Japan court orders dolphin-hunt town to pay damages to Australian (2016, March 25)
retrieved 19 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2016-03-japan-court-dolphin-hunt-town-australian.html>

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