

February 3, 2012

Greece bans animal circuses

The Greek Government has banned the use of all animals in circuses following a campaign by Animal Defenders International (ADI) and the Greek Animal Welfare Fund (GAWF), backed by over 50 local animal protection groups across Greece. The new animal protection law also addresses a number of important issues concerning stray animals.

Tim Phillips of ADI, who launched the Stop Circus Suffering campaign in Greece in 2006 said: *“In circuses in Greece we saw horrific suffering. I remember a hippo living in a small, filthy cage on the back of a lorry with a stinking pool barely bigger than a bath tub to wallow in. This is a great day for animal protection in Greece and indeed Europe. We applaud the Greek Government for taking a strong, unequivocal stand against animal suffering in circuses.”*

Evgenia Mataragka of the GAWF, based in Athens said: *“We are delighted that Greece has said no to cruelty in the name of entertainment. We have witnessed terrible suffering of animals in traveling circuses here and these animals often have to endure long journeys by sea from Italy. Many municipalities have already banned animal circuses in Greece, so we believe that this will be a popular with Greek people.”*

Greece is the first country in Europe to ban all animals from circuses and similar performances. Austria currently has a ban on wild animal acts, and several European countries including Portugal, Denmark and Croatia have measures to ban or phase out wild animals in circuses.

Bolivia was the first country to ban all animals from circuses and in February 2011, ADI completed an enforcement operation with the Bolivian authorities closing down and rescuing every animal from circuses defying the law. This included relocating 29 lions to the USA as well as rescuing primates and horses.

ADI and GAWF have said they are committed to assisting the Greek Government with enforcing the ban.

In July 2011, Peru banned wild animals in circuses following an undercover investigation and campaign by Animal Defenders International. It is clear now that the days are numbered for keeping animals in travelling facilities and forcing them to do tricks in the name of entertainment. **Legislation is currently being considered by the Governments of the USA, Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Ecuador.**

The UK will now be under considerable pressure to implement a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses, which was called for by an overwhelming vote by back bench MPs last year. The British Government had cited a legal challenge to Austria’s ban on wild animal acts as a reason for not implementing a UK ban. **However, in December the Austrian Constitutional**

Court in Vienna announced that it had thrown out the application by Circus Krone to overturn Austria's ban.

source: Animal Defenders International

Article 12 of the New Greek law

Ban of use of every kind of animals in any kind of entertainment and other similar businesses

1. It is forbidden to maintain any kind of animals in circuses or theatres with a variety programme, given that the animals are used in any way and for any purpose in their programme, performing, parading, or appearing in front of an audience.
2. It is forbidden to maintain any animal in entertainment shows, amusement parks, in motor racing circuits, concerts, exhibitions, fairs, or other artistic or recreational festivals, given that the animals are used in any way and for any purpose in their programme.