

Smt. Annpurna Devi
Union Minister of Women and Child Development
Ministry of Women and Child Development,
Shastri Bhawan, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road,
New Delhi-110001

17 January 2025

Respected Minister:

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India and our over two million members and supporters to express our deep concerns over children attending jallikattu and other violent events where animals (and often also humans) are harmed. Jallikattu, as you may know, is a cruel and often deadly spectacle held in Tamil Nadu during which a crowd of men gathers to chase and taunt bulls. I have attached a screenshot taken from the live streaming of the Avaniyapuram jallikattu event that was held earlier this week showing a child in the arena (Annexure 1). At the same event, a 22-year-old man was gored to death by a fleeing bull. This child was also at great risk of injury and could have been killed and is certain to be traumatized by the senseless violence and gruesome death and he likely witnessed.

Today, I am writing to request your leadership in implementing the General Comment No. 26 (2023) on Children's Rights and the Environment, with a Special Focus on Climate Change (Annexure 2) published by the Committee on the Rights of the Child which states "*children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals* [emphasis added]." The Committee on the Rights of the Child is responsible for interpreting and monitoring the implementation of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a legally binding agreement signed by countries that outlines the fundamental rights of every child. India ratified the UNCRC on 11 December 1992 agreeing in principle to all articles, with reservations only on certain practical issues regarding child labour.

In the interest of a compassionate future society and for the protection of India's children, PETA India calls on our government to fulfil obligations under the UNCRC as clarified by the Committee by protecting children from potential direct physical harm at jallikattu events as spectators or as participants, as well as from exposure to violence to animals during animal sacrifice, and where animals are abused for "entertainment", such as in circuses, during races and events in which animals are forced to fight.

During jallikattu, men gather to chase and bully bulls who are struck and yanked painfully by the ropes threaded through their nostrils and jabbed with weapons. The bulls become so frightened, that they run, often breaking their bones, or losing their lives, and goring participants and spectators in their attempt to escape. Since jallikattu was permitted again in Tamil Nadu, at least 133 men and children, and 44 bulls have died. Victims of fatal injuries

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at different jallikattu events in recent years include a 12-year-old (Annexure 3) and a 14-year-old (Annexure 4).

In paragraph 63 of the Supreme Court's Judgment in *Animal Welfare Board of India vs A Nagaraja & Ors* (Civil Appeal No 5387/2014) of 7 May 2014 (the "A. Nagaraja Judgment") the Supreme Court explains:

"...Bulls, in that situation, are stressed, exhausted, injured and humiliated. Frustration of the Bulls is noticeable in their vocalization and, looking at the facial expression of the bulls, ethologist or an ordinary man can easily sense their suffering. Bulls, otherwise are very peaceful animals dedicating their life for human use and requirement, but are subjected to such an ordeal that not only inflicts serious suffering on them but also forces them to behave in ways, namely, they do not behave, force them into the event which does not like and, in that process, they are being tortured to the hilt. Bulls cannot carry the so-called performance without being exhausted, injured, tortured or humiliated."

In fact, the A. Nagaraj Judgment was a legal pursuit initiated after the petitioner's young son died after being hit by a bull as a spectator.

Also, every year, thousands of animals, including goats, buffaloes, camels, and others, are killed for sacrifice in the country during religious occasions in chaotic and unhygienic conditions by untrained individuals. These acts often take place in places of worship or on the street, and in full public view, including in front of children. The methods of slaughter are exceptionally brutal, involving practices such as beheading, neck-twisting, stabbing with sharp instruments, crushing, biting, and slitting throats—all while the animals are fully conscious, causing immense suffering.

Meanwhile, animal circuses force animals to perform through weapon use and other punishment and dogs, roosters, buffaloes and other animals forced to fight end up severely injured or dead.

Watching sentient animals who have the same capacity to feel pain and suffer as we do be terrorised or killed is inarguably traumatic and can be psychologically scarring for children, most of whom have a natural empathy for animals, often leading to anxiety, fear, emotional trauma or desensitization to violence.

The 2012 review of studies on the link between cruelty to animals and violence to humans by Eleonora Gullone titled *Animal Cruelty, Antisocial Behaviour, and Aggression: More than a Link*, is summarized in a *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma* as:

"1. Childhood witnessing of violence and aggression towards people and animals is one of the prime risk factors for the perpetration of animal cruelty and violent acts in general,

2: Youth exposed at an early age to hurting or angry aggression towards animals are more likely to commit animal cruelty and to do so more frequently than youth exposed to such cruelty at older ages,

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3: Witnessing of cruelty is not only a potential pathway for animal cruelty, but also for bullying and other forms of human aggression,

4: Children who witness significant others, such as parents or older siblings, committing violence towards humans and/or animals are more likely to report committing animal cruelty and aggression towards others.”

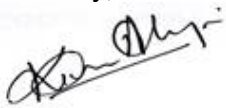
A paper published in *Forensic Research & Criminology International Journal* explains, “There have been consistent research findings to suggest a strong link between animal cruelty and violence towards people including domestic abuse and child abuse ... Animal abusers are more likely to engage in criminal behavior and to be diagnosed as having Antisocial Personality Disorder. Those who engage in animal cruelty were 3 times more likely to commit other crimes, including murder, rape, robbery, assault, harassment, threats, and drug/substance abuse.”

These studies and observations are supported by numerous real-life examples. In India, Ameerul Islam, who was convicted of raping and murdering Kerala law student Jisha, had a history of raping and killing dogs and goats and Veerappan was a serial killer and elephant poacher. Many serial killers and violent criminals abroad like school shooters also have recorded histories of cruelty to animals.

As the Committee on the Rights of the Child has recognized, to help young people thrive, it is essential that measures are taken to protect them from witnessing acts of violence to animals. PETA India urges your Ministry to take steps to stop children from attending events where animals are harmed, including jallikattu, animal sacrifice and forms of “entertainment” that are abusive to animals, and to urge relevant central and state decision-makers to prohibit such events altogether.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter. I hope through the actions recommended herein you will pave the way for a more compassionate and safe nation.

Sincerely,



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