|  |
| --- |
| **Press Release** |
| from | **Korea Animal Rights Advocates (KARA)**122, Jandari-ro, Mapo-gu, Seoul, South Korea |
| Inquiry | Hyunji Kim, arqus@ekara.org, +82 70 4760 1213Heyin Son, hayley89@ekara.org, +82 2 3482 0999 |
| Date | 4th Aug 2016 |

**Korea Animal Rights Advocates (KARA) holds ‘International Conference to End Dog Meat Industry of Korea’ on August 5**

**-A solution-seeking discussion of Korea’s dog meat industry as an international issue of cruelty to animals (participated by activists in working in the field, members of the National Assembly, ecologists, legal experts, and veterinarians)**

**-Revealing the unparalleled level of cruelty in the dog meat industry in Korea, which runs counter to the global trends of animal welfare**

**-Discussing legislation to ban dog meat, with the strong support of the National Assembly’s Forum for Animal Welfare**

**-Spotlighting the importance of government action through an assessment of Chinese and Taiwanese examples**

The dog meat industry has been a hotbed of chronic animal abuse, but even ‘Boknal’ (when dog meat consumption often occurs) has seen a drastic decline in demand. On August 5, Korea Animal Rights Advocates (KARA) is hosting the ‘International Conference to End Dog Meat Industry of Korea’, which will take place at Seoul Museum of History (Yajugae Hall, first floor) from 10 AM to 6 PM. Members of the National Assembly, veterinarians, ecologists, legal experts, and activists from civil society organizations in Korea and abroad will come together for the Conference, which is anticipated to launch a serious discussion on a ban on dog meat in Korea.

The government’s lack of action and a superficial discussion for and against the ban has resulted in over 20 years of stalled efforts in solving the problem of the dog meat industry. This will be the first international conference worldwide that is dedicated solely to the dog meat industry. The Conference seeks to break out of the perennial box of the cultural relativity argument and expose the truth of the problem in which definition of a companion animal as a ‘dog for consumption’ results in prejudice against native Korean dogs and dog breeds. The Conference also has significant meaning as it brings the perspective that the Korean dog meat industry is not merely a Korean issue but an internationally relevant problem of cruelty to animals. Also meaningful is the fact that discussions to find solutions to the problem will include the sharing of experiences in China and Taiwan, where dog meat is also consumed.

At the Conference, KARA will present their findings from field investigations, uncovering the tragic reality of Korean ‘dog meat farms’ and the problem of animal cruelty in dog meat farms. The presentation will reveal how, due to the government’s neglect, the reality in Korea is that it is the only country in the world where dogs are bred for consumption in huge factory farming facilities that hold thousands of dogs. Furthermore, the Korean government has remained silent despite the fact that more than 1 million dogs are slaughtered each year; and although the dog meat industry is violating existing laws, there have been no crackdowns on the industry. Yet the Conference will be a place for discussions beyond the censure of the government’s inaction, for in-depth conversations on alternatives appropriate for the future.

International animal protection organizations will also provide details from their rescues of dogs from Korean dog meat farms, detailing the seriousness of the problems in the dog meat industry and the prejudice against and systematic abuse of what are known as ‘consumption dogs’. From 2015 on, Humane Society International rescued approximately 500 dogs from Korean dog meat farms and they were adopted by families in the US, Canada, and more. Their report on the rescues will illustrate that, without a doubt, Korea’s ‘consumption dogs’ are no different from companion dogs.

This Conference will also shed light on the fact that worldwide, there have been legislative bans on dog meat, but absolutely no cases of the legalization of dog meat. Additionally, countries in which dog meat consumption occurs have seen a common trend of rising activism for the ban of dog meat—these activism efforts and their successes will be shared at the Conference. In line with such global animal welfare trends, and with the National Assembly’s Forum for Animal Welfare (first established in 2015 and reopened with the 20th National Assembly), the Conference is also expected to be a place for vigorous discussion of a detailed plan for legislative efforts to put an end to dog meat consumption.

Lee Jeong-Mi, co-representative of the National Assembly’s Forum for Animal Welfare and a Justice Party member, will be giving a keynote speech on the status of animal welfare in Korea and courses of action for the future to solve the problem of dog meat consumption. Bak Hong-Geun—co-representative of the Forum for Animal Welfare and a member of the Minjoo Party—and Professor Woo Hee-Jong—a chairman of the advisory committee for the Forum for Animal Welfare and a professor of Veterinary Medicine at Seoul National University—will be supporting the Conference with congratulatory messages. In addition, Suh Cooc-Hwa, the lawyer who supervised the *Regulations Guidebook for the End of the Dog Meat Industry*, which was published by KARA earlier this year, will be present to provide legislative solutions for the ban of dog meat, and to provide a legal perspective on the ethics and necessity of such legislations.

China’s Dalian Vshine Animal Protection and Taiwan’s Taiwan SPCA will also share their activism stories, which is expected to be of great assistance to the discussions on legislation. In China, the responses against dog meat consumption have gotten stronger, while in Taiwan, the slaughter of dogs has been illegalized, and a second amendment to the ban of dog meat consumption are being reviewed.

China is perhaps the most well-known of the countries in which dog meat is consumed, and approximately ten million dogs are slaughtered in China yearly. The nation is home to the Yulin Dog Meat Festival, which is held every June. Recently, opposition to the festival has gained momentum and amid such public sentiment, anti-dog-meat campaigns have been thriving. The Chinese government and the Yulin city government has also begun to distance themselves from dog meat. In Taiwan, the law banning the slaughter of dogs was introduced in 2001, and in certain areas of the country, laws specifically banning the consumption of dog meat followed. Recently there was a motion to ban dog meat consumption which would ‘make not only the slaughter of dogs illegal but also dog meat consumption illegal’; all in all, Taiwan seems to be closer than ever to ending its dog meat industry. Both the Chinese and Taiwanese governments are a clear contrast to the Korean government, which has been neglecting the issue of dog meat consumption entirely.

Everyone is welcome to come to the International Conference to End Dog Meat Industry of Korea, and pre-registration to the event can be found on KARA’s website (<https://ekara.org/activity/post/view/112713>). Vegetable curry will be served for lunch free of charge. Simultaneous interpretation will be available, and information booklets will be provided onsite in Korean and English. A souvenir of the event will also be provided for attendees. KARA looks forward to seeing both the media and regular attendees at the event.

**Yajugae Hall(1st floor) at Seoul Museum of History**

**(Address: 55, Saemunan-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, South Korea)**

