

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak  
The Prime Minister  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

26 October 2023

Via e-mail: [rishi.sunak.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:rishi.sunak.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Prime Minister:

We're writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals – PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally – to request that you implement legislation that would prohibit exposing children to hunting activities, including trail hunting, which is often used as a smokescreen for killing wild animals. This request is in accordance with General Comment No 26, recently published by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, regarding the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the UK has ratified.

As you know, general comments provide definitive guidance and clarity as to how nations must act in order to comply with the convention and meet their legal obligation to protect children's rights. General Comment No 26 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." In light of this authoritative guidance on the legally binding human rights charter, we call on the government to protect children by enacting the aforementioned legislation.

The animals killed for "sport" or morbid tradition have the same capacity to feel pain and suffer as the dogs and cats who are treasured family members – such as your own dog companion. Watching wildlife being terrorised, gunned down, or otherwise slaughtered is inarguably traumatic and can be psychologically scarring for young people, most of whom have a natural empathy for animals. What's worse, some determine from such experiences that the lives of others are not valuable and that it's acceptable – even enjoyable – to inflict pain on and torment others. This is especially concerning in light of studies across the social sciences that have determined violent and aggressive criminals often have a history of abusing animals as children.

Certain fox hunting groups start grooming children as young as 4 to chase foxes to their deaths, and while the official line may be to allow only those over the age of 12 to use guns, some parents actually start teaching kids to shoot as young as the age of 3. Recently, an 11-year-old boy was shot in the hip – leaving him with potentially life-changing injuries – during a hunting trip in Sussex. And in 2021, a 2-year-old girl was fatally injured during a fox hunt in Yorkshire.

As the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has recognised, to help young people thrive, it's essential that we take measures to protect them from witnessing acts of casual violence against animals. May we please hear from you that you will follow the committee's guidance

and ban young people from being exposed to or encouraged to participate in hunting spectacles?

Sincerely,

Amanda Abbington

Gemma Atkinson

Tracy Edwards MBE

Peter Egan

Kirsty Gallacher

Ricky Gervais

Shirlie Kemp

Dame Twiggy Lawson DBE

Ingrid Newkirk

Sir Mark Rylance

Alan Wilkins