



Rui Costa
President, Sport Lisboa e Benfica

4 August 2025

Dear Mr Costa:

I'm writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, PETA, to ask you to retire any eagles held at the Estádio da Luz and replace them with human or animatronic mascots. While we've raised this issue with you before, our renewed call comes after a concerned stadium museum patron reported seeing an eagle tethered at the venue – an act that can cause significant distress to birds.

Wild animals like eagles don't belong at sporting events, denied their freedom by tethering. In nature, these magnificent birds soar freely, hunt in vast territories, and spend most of their time high in the tree line. Those used as nonconsenting mascots are denied the opportunity to engage in natural behaviours, leading to extreme frustration and stress. In the report, *Tether and Torment*, author and veterinary expert Dr Emma Milne defines tethering as “one of the most concerning and ethically questionable practices used to keep birds of prey captive.”

A stadium lit by dazzling lights and filled with boisterous fans is no place for animals. Birds of prey have incredibly sensitive hearing and vision. They can easily become frightened, disoriented, and panicked, placing themselves and others at risk, or try to escape, as happened at the Estádio da Luz in 2018. To highlight how poorly animals and loud events mix, the complainant said that a stadium staff member—who indicated that they also found the chaining of the bird concerning—explained that the eagle was chained after a sound check for an upcoming show startled the bird.

Records detail many incidents involving birds used as mascots, including an owl who died after being hit by a ball, eagles who crashed into walls or glass windows, and a falcon who landed on a fan's head, sinking his talons into the man's scalp. In another incident, a rowdy football fan punched his rival team's eagle mascot.

Public sentiment is fast shifting away from using animals for so-called entertainment. As a result, seaquariums are closing, animal rides are ending, and governments and companies are banning animal circuses, dolphin shows, bullfights and other spectacles that harm animals.

Please take this opportunity to end your use of live animal mascots. If you agree to retire the birds to a sanctuary, PETA will contribute towards the costs of a fabulous eagle mascot costume, or a life-like animatronic eagle, that would allow your tradition to continue in a way that is more fitting for 21st-century values. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mimi Bekhechi, PETA

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