

Expert Statement Regarding Martinha, a Rescued Common Dolphin

Martinha is a female common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) currently held at “Centro de Reabilitação de Animais Marinhos de Quiaios” (CRAM-Q) in Quiaios, Portugal, a marine wildlife rescue centre managed by the non-profit SPVS (Sociedade Portuguesa de Vida Salvagem) and authorised by the Portuguese government. She was rescued from a stranding in 2007 and, after rehabilitation efforts, has not been released and is being held in a medical rehabilitation enclosure at CRAM-Q. It has now been over 9 years and this dolphin is still being held in this pool, which is approximately 7 metres wide, 13 metres long, and 2 metres deep.

As marine mammal experts familiar with the fundamentals of rescuing and rehabilitating stranded or distressed marine mammals, we note that transparency is essential when determining if the conditions under which a cetacean is held for medical or rehabilitation purposes are adequate in terms of the animal’s welfare, especially when the animal is held in those conditions for an extended period. Under typical circumstances, medical enclosures for cetaceans under human care are not intended to hold an animal for extended periods (e.g., more than a few weeks or months).

We are aware that CRAM-Q has stated that international experts have assessed Martinha’s conditions and proposed no changes, but the identities of these experts have not been publicly disclosed nor have their assessments been published. We support efforts by identified international experts, ideally facilitated by government authorities, to directly evaluate the conditions at CRAM-Q in which Martinha is being held and to publicly release their observations and conclusions about her condition.

Signed:

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