Report about Transports of Live Animals and Ritual Slaughter Acts during the Celebration of the Muslim Holiday “Abd El Kebir” in the Autonomous City of Ceuta on 6th and 7th November 2011

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I. Background information:

Every year the Muslim population of Ceuta that forms approx. 50% of the inhabitants of the exclave celebrate their religious holiday “Abd El Kebir”. During the feast every family who can afford it slaughters an animal according to religious rites. This means without pre-slaughter stunning. For the celebration every year around 5,000 – 6,000 animals are imported from the Spanish mainland to the exclave. This year around 5,500 animals, all male ovine (majority) and caprine animals are slaughtered. The animals arrive to Ceuta around two or three weeks before the holiday and are kept in the four or five holdings in Ceuta. The Muslim families go to these farms to buy their animal. The animals receive a selling number and remain at the holdings until short before the the holiday. The majority of the animals are picked up from the farms the day before the slaughtering. Therefore, the families have to find a possibility to accommodate their animal during at least one night. The ritual slaughter acts are carried out mainly in private homes and less than 20% of the animals are slaughtered in “slaughter – tents” which are installed in several places throughout the city.

II. Observations

1) Picking up the animals from the holdings the day before the slaughtering and transport

In the above mentioned holdings, the animals are kept in pens. In order to get the animals out of the pens individually and to take them to the means of transport, in the majority of the cases, they are dragged by their horns, by one leg or by their fleece. For the transport, pick-up owners offer a transport service in exchange of money. These pick-ups are not authorised and not prepared for animal transports. Furthermore, cars are used to transport the animals. In this case the animals are transported in the boots. In the majority of the cases three or the four legs are tied together before the animal is loaded onto the platform of the pick up or into the boot. The animals remain like this, with their legs tied during the transport. Many of the animals are trembling visibly, gnashing with their teeth and breathing rapidly.
For the first time, this year on the platforms of some of the pick-ups “pens” were created with mobile elements of different origins such as (fences, pallets or other wooden constructions). This enables people to transport the animals in the pick-ups without shackling them.

2) Animal Accommodation

In general, the animals are kept during the night and until the slaughtering in the private homes and on tied in stairways, courtyards, etc. of apartment complexes.

The Anda and Animals’ Angels’ team observes that around 20 animals stay overnight in the tent installed the neighbourhood “Ferrocarril”. The animals remain tied individually and have no water, no food and no bedding material at their disposition. Furthermore, the floor of the tent is wet. The animals are tied in a way that hinders them to have contact between each other and to crowd together.
3) Slaughter Acts

For the slaughtering on 7th November, the Autonomous City of Ceuta installed 17 tents in different neighbourhoods of the city. These tents are equipped with a water connection and a connection with the public waste water pipe. Furthermore, there are containers to collect the slaughter wastes. In the tent located at Benzú, the team observes that blood runs directly into the sea.

In the tents, the slaughtering is carried out directly by the owner of the animal or if he wishes he can contract another person. There is no obligation that the slaughtering has to be done by a professional slaughter man. Generally, the quality of slaughter acts is very bad regarding animal protection. This means among other problems: fixing the animals by shackling their legs, repeated cuts up to 8 – 10 times, inadequate knives, further manipulation of the animal before the animal looses consciousness. At the tent at Benzú, Anda and Animals’ Angels observe an extremely cruel slaughter act that also provokes criticism among the other users of the tent. The animal, the ram Pedro, makes clear attempts to flee with his neck already cut.

In the tents there is no veterinary supervision and accordingly there is no ante-mortem inspection, no check of the animal identification and no post-mortem inspection.

The percentage of the animals slaughtered in the tents installed by the City Council is very low, thus most of the animals are be slaughtered at private homes. The slaughterhouse of the city remains closes that day.
III. Infringements of the legislation

The transport and slaughter operations and all connected operations infringe under numerous aspects

- the law 32/2007 (national Spanish Animal welfare act) for the care of the animals in farms, during transport, experimentation and slaughter,
- the law 8 / 2003 on Animal Health,
- the Royal Decree 54/1995 on the protection of animals during slaughter and killing.

IV. Development regarding animal protection

Anda and Animals’ Angels have been observing the transport, the ritual slaughter and the connected operations during the celebration of the Muslim holiday in Ceuta since 2004. Since then no improvements occurred regarding animal protection. The situation continues being totally illegal and every year during the celebration of the Muslim holiday in Ceuta immense and unnecessary stress, fear and pain is caused to thousands of animals. This happens without that the authorities in Ceuta, the national authorities or the religious Muslim authorities intervene.

During many years, the authorities of the autonomous City refused to any conversations with Anda and Animals’ Angels about possible improvements in favour of the animals during celebration of the Muslim holiday. Only after the intervention of the Spanish ombudsman the authorities saw themselves obliged to listen to the proposals of Anda and Animals’ Angels.

Thus taking into consideration the special idiosyncrasy of Ceuta, in 2010, Animals’ Angels and Anda elaborated a “Protocol for actions to take for improving the situation of the animals during slaughtering and connected operations carried out during the celebration of ID EL KEBIR in Ceuta” addressed to the Health Department of the Government of Ceuta. In a meeting in May 2011, the Government signalised their full support and suggested to implement the protocol step by step starting with the improvement of the transport situation and the animal accommodation during the night previous to the slaughtering.

After changes in the government of Ceuta, Anda and Animals’ Angels had another meeting with the new and current Senator of the Health Department of Ceuta. He confirmed to follow the intentions of the previous Government and promised to improve the transport situation and the animal accommodation.

However, this year once again Animals’ Angels and ANDA did not observe any improvement during the celebration of Abd El Kebir in Ceuta and the problems detected were exactly the same as in the previous years. The promises made by the Health Department were not at all complied with. The situation is as disappointing as in the previous years and the animal suffering has not been reduced.

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