

Berufsverband der Zootierpfleger e. V.

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Open Letter to Members of the Barcelona Municipal Council

The Association of German Zookeepers - "Berufsverband der Zootierpfleger" (BdZ) has noted with concern that the Barcelona City Council gave initial approval to an amendment to strictly regulate the Barcelona Zoo, reducing the institution down to 11 species and calling for the transfer or relocation of the nearly 2,000 animals that remain to sanctuaries or rescue centres. The Barcelona Zoo is also said to be leaving all zoo associations, thereby losing all accreditation.

But the rush to criticise the Barcelona Zoo and close it down for welfare concerns, ignores an equally important contribution: Hundreds of critically endangered species have been saved through the captive breeding and reintroduction programmes of zoos and aquariums.

More than 1 million visitors annually come to Barcelona Zoo because they can see many threatened species of animals and they know that zoological gardens are becoming more and more important for education, research and conservation. Zoos are constantly improving.

In addition to concern for the uncertain future of the valuable wildlife stock at the Barcelona Zoo and the great loss to the citizens of Barcelona and the many visitors to this beautiful city, we would like to draw attention to the fate of the great zookeepers in the Barcelona Zoo. Many of our colleagues in Barcelona Zoo are members of the Association of Iberian Zookeepers - "Asociación Ibérica de Cuidadores de Animales Salvajes" (AICAS). As a zookeeper you do not go to work just to earn a living - as a zookeeper, you sacrifice yourself daily for your animals and work actively to protect the species. These people would not just lose a job - they would lose their life's work.

The option that zoos do not present animals as beings deserving of respect, endowed with physical and psychological sensitivity and cognitive and emotional abilities are spread by people, who have no idea how to run a zoo. There is no scientific justification for not keeping certain species in general anymore. So there is no reason to give up the attitude in general, if you can show proper investments.

In summary, we find no evidence that the factual release of Barcelona Zoo has the support of anything but a tiny minority of the citizens of Barcelona. We therefore call on the Barcelona City Council to reconsider its position, and to discuss with Zooprofessionals how the Zoo could be adapted without the wholesale destruction of its current effectiveness and a catastrophe for the animals it currently houses. And for the animal, species and nature protection in Spain is now to hope that one can stop this movement against the zoo of Barcelona.

Yours Faithfully,

The Association of German Zookeepers - "Berufsverband der Zootierpfleger" (BdZ) was founded in 1993 in Frankfurt Zoo. The association represents the German-speaking zookeepers and currently has 1580 members mainly in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Since 2003, members of the BdZ have been leading the implementation of an international convention for zookeepers (ICZ - International Congress of Zookeepers) with the aim of better communication and the support and development of other regional zookeepers' associations. Since 2010 the BdZ has been a member of the World Zoo Association (WAZA) and since 2015 associate member of the Association of Zoological Gardens (VdZ).

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