

## Urgent Call: Proposed Legislation Threatening Street Dogs in Turkiye

As animal rights advocates in Turkiye, we want to draw your attention to a proposed legislation that could lead to the mass isolation and slaughter of stray dogs in the country's streets.



In recent times, the issue of stray dogs in Turkiye has sparked significant public debate, with attempts to address the situation by punishing stray animals rather than holding municipalities accountable for their responsibilities under Law No. 5199, which they have consistently failed to fulfil for the last 20 years, since the enactment of the law. The AKP government and its allies are attempting to introduce a legislative proposal that would sanction the mass killing of animals, contradicting public conscience and our cultural values.

As far as we have learned from the government and ministry officials, as well as the media reports, the scope of the proposed legislation includes the collection of animals from the streets to be isolated in so-called "shelters," which are essentially "death camps", where they would be killed (euthanized, they say) if not adopted within one month. The government calls it "the European model". We strongly condemn this approach of punishing animals instead of holding municipalities accountable for their deliberate failure to implement the principles of providing for the animals' welfare, including spaying, vaccinating and releasing into the environment they were taken from, as mandated by Law No. 5199!

Citizens, civil society organizations—including ours—and professional bodies are organizing protests in various cities across Turkiye. We all stand by the right to life, advocating for dogs and all animals to live safely in the streets where they belong. Our goal is to prevent the introduction of legislation in the Grand National Assembly of Turkiye (TBMM) that could threaten their fundamental rights. We do not doubt that unless the real culprits are held accountable and their responsibilities towards animals are fulfilled, no problem will be solved, but rather exacerbated.

As animal rights activists, we know that there are fair and sustainable solutions to balance the population of street dogs, as put forth by relevant professional bodies, while protecting their rights and that of other non-human animals. Firstly, we call on the government, relevant ministries, and municipalities to fulfil their ethical and legal duties, and advocate for the improvement of existing laws in favor of animals. Advanced spaying and vaccination programs, alongside education and awareness campaigns, should be implemented to ensure the health and well-being of animals and secure their centuries-long place in society. Yet, in the current context where both legal and illegal breeding are permitted and abandoning animals to the streets or shelters, as well as killing them, goes unpunished, the dog population cannot be effectively managed. Dogs living in streets will continue to be collected, confined, and killed in an endless cycle of violence and unaccountability, perpetuating the long-standing deadlock.

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Istanbul

We kindly request you to issue a written statement expressing your support for animals and animal rights activists in Turkiye, and your advocacy for the right to life of dogs. Your endorsement will empower us to protect the lives of dogs and many other animals in Turkiye.

With kind regards,

Law for Life Initiative (*Yaşam İçin Yasa İnisiyatifi*)

To learn more about the current situation in Türkiye and the ongoing [\*\*#SokaktayımYanımdayım\*\*](#) 'Life Watch' actions we initiated simultaneously in various cities on May 23rd, please contact us via email or follow us on social media using the accounts listed below. Our main slogan, “Sokaktayım Yanımdayım”, means “I’m standing with you in the streets”.



## About Law for Life Initiative

The Law for Life Initiative (*Yaşam İçin Yasa İnisiyatifi*) was established in 2021 by activists and representatives of civil society organizations, responding to a call from Eray Özgüner, the mother of the late human rights and animal rights advocate Burak Özgüner. Based on the principle that the protection of the rights of animals is the most fundamental and necessary condition for an equal, just, and liveable world, the Initiative continues to advocate actively by targeting central and local governments to combat discrimination against animals of all species.

[yasamicinyasa.com](http://yasamicinyasa.com)

X: [@yasamicinyasa](#)

YT: [@yasamicinyasa](#)

IG: [yasamicinyasainisiyatifi](#)

E-MAIL: [yasamicinyasa@gmail.com](mailto:yasamicinyasa@gmail.com)

