



TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

THEMATIC REPORT ADDENDUM: THE RIGHT TO PROTECTION FROM ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE

In relation to the 7th periodic report submitted in 2024 by SPAIN to the Committee according to article 44 of the Convention

The **Coordinadora de Profesionales por la Prevención de Abusos, CoPPA** (Coordinating Committee of Professionals for the Prevention of Abuse) is a non-profit association made up of professionals in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, sociology, human rights and law which works in Spain and Latin America for the prevention of violence against groups and individuals in vulnerable situations, and the protection of their Human Rights.

Through this report, CoPPA wishes to convey to the Committee on the Rights of the Child our concerns for the welfare of children exposed to organized spectacles and events of violence against animals in Spain, specifically bullfights and other tauromachy events.

Section 25 of the Concluding Observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Spain, adopted by the Committee at its 77th session (14 January to 2 February, 2018), states:

E. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39).

Harmful practices

Bullfighting

25. In order to prevent the harmful effects of the spectacle of bullfighting on children, the Committee recommends that the State party prohibit the participation of children under the age of 18 as bullfighters and as audience members in bullfighting spectacles.

However, despite this observation 25, the exposure of children (both as spectators and participants) to bullfighting spectacles and other tauromachy events continues to be permitted and take place in Spain. Children are exposed to this violence in arenas and also in open public spaces, such as streets, town squares and beaches, among other locations.

Indeed, almost everywhere in Spain where these violent events are still orchestrated and held, children continue to be officially admitted as spectators, and in those cases where these events take place in town squares and public spaces, they can even witness the violence as unwitting bystanders.

Among several other practices that demonstrate the non-compliance of Spain with the aforementioned observation of the Committee (such as the continued existence of bullfighting schools that admit children as students and encourage their direct participation in these violent activities), CoPPA wishes to draw the Committee's attention to two current and recent issues:

- In the Balearic Islands, the sole Autonomous Community in which the access of minors under 18 to bullfights is currently prohibited, a Bill that proposes to abolish this prohibition that protects children has been introduced in the Balearic Parliament and included in the legislative process.
- At the same time, CoPPA has observed with alarm how multiple bullfighting tauromachy events (namely "encierros") that are specifically promoted as events for children and expressly aim to foment their attendance and participation have been held and are being organized in municipalities in different parts of Spain, advertised under other names in order to avoid being prohibited or not authorised.

Proposed law to abolish the existing ban on access of children to bullfights in the Balearic Islands

On 4 June 2024, in the Parliament of the Balearic Islands, a bill was introduced in order to permit the admission of children to bullfights in this Autonomous Community (currently the only community that prohibits minors under 18 from attending these events).

According to the proposed bill, "children under eighteen years of age cannot be restricted in their access to a spectacle considered and protected as cultural heritage that has a positive impact on their education and participation in the cultural richness of our country".

CoPPA warns about this profoundly misguided statement, both dangerous and legally erroneous, which completely ignores the need to shield children from violence, especially orchestrated and applauded violence, and appears to propose that cultural traditions deserve more protection than children. In this respect, we highlight the pronouncement of the Committee in its General Comment No. 14 (2013), which is being disregarded in this bill in the Balearic Islands:

"While the preservation of religious and cultural values and traditions as part of the child's identity must be taken into account, practices that are incompatible or at odds with the rights set out in the Convention are not in the best interests of the child. Cultural identity cannot excuse or justify decision-makers and authorities from perpetuating cultural traditions and values that deny the child or children the rights guaranteed to them by the Convention".

Furthermore, the Spanish Constitution establishes that the best interests of the child prevail over other rights and freedoms, and guarantees the protection granted to children by international treaties, protection that in no way violates the right of children to access culture.

Authorisation of children's bull runs or bullfighting events with the participation of minors under 18

CoPPA has been able to confirm that in municipalities all over Spain, activities and events directed specifically at children continue to be authorised. Despite being promoted under alternative names that aim to misrepresent these practices as something other than a tauromachy event (e.g. transhumance, exhibition of cattle handling, etc.), in practice these events involve actual bull runs or street tauromachy events along urban routes, in which children participate directly.

These are cases in which child protection legislation prohibiting the participation of children in dangerous events is directly violated, and/or in which fraud is committed by the organisers who advertise these events and apply for the corresponding administrative authorisation, avoiding the use of the word "*encierro*" (bull running) and using other terms to make them appear to be events that are supposedly harmless to children, when this is not the case.

In view of the above, it may be prudent for the Committee to:

- Remind Spain that all public authorities, not only the State but also the Autonomous Communities and local councils, each within the scope of their respective legal authority/jurisdiction, have an obligation to protect children.
- Urge the Spanish State to exercise all State legal authority/jurisdiction in these matters pertaining to the protection of children from the violence of bullfighting (which, despite statements by the Spanish Government in its 7th report have not been limited by the Constitutional Court), to approve new regulations that guarantee this protection throughout the State territory, in a uniform manner.

Report: *Children's Exposure to Spectacles and Orchestrated Activities of Violence Against Animals: impacts, repercussions and the need for protection (2023).*

As previously documented by CoPPA and presented to this Committee during the pre-sessions for the evaluation of other countries, studies indicate that, either as direct participants or as spectators, the exposure of children to this type of events that involve violence against animals poses harmful effects on the children's physical and/or emotional well-being and on their psychological development.

There is a clear physical risk for children and adolescents attending or participating in bullfighting events, not only in the form of bull running, that Spanish public administrations cannot ignore. In these activities, children's and other people's proximity to terrorized and/or wounded animals can lead to dangerous situations, including accidents with human casualties, which are not infrequent in these types of events.

The exposure of children and adolescents to these violent spectacles that include aggressions directed at animals and sometimes scenes of serious injuries to people can cause children to suffer emotional distress and trauma. It is also very important to keep in mind that the presence of adults, particularly parents, who applaud or manifest approval towards the violence, can exacerbate negative effects on youngsters, affect their sense of security and increase the risk of long-term negative repercussions for exposed children.

Given the additional knowledge provided by recent research, in order to provide the Committee with updated information on this problem, the document: *Children's Exposure to Spectacles and Orchestrated Activities of Violence Against Animals: impacts, repercussions and the need for protection* (CoPPA No. VA/NNA-2023-11) is hereby attached. The contents of this document underscore the need for all public authorities and administrations in Spain, regardless of their territorial scope, to guarantee the protection of children from this form of violence and therefore from the violation of their rights.

Spain, September 2024.

Coordinadora de Profesionales por la Prevención de Abusos (CoPPA)

Translated from original Spanish version