



**FONDATION
FRANZ
WEBER**

Thematic Report on France: Children and tauromachy

Failure to comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child

2nd Report by Fondation Franz Weber
July 1st, 2020, Berne, Switzerland

Author: Anna Zangger, lawyer, Fondation Franz Weber (annazangger@ffw.ch)

Fondation Franz Weber

Mühlenplatz 3, 3003 Berne, Switzerland – Email: ffw@ffw.ch – Website: www.ffw.ch

Table of contents

0.	Summary.....	4
1.	Methodology.....	4
2.	Introduction.....	4
3.	Types of bullfighting events in France.....	6
	3.1. Corridas.....	6
	3.2 The “course camarguaise”.....	7
	3.3. The “course landaise”.....	8
	3.4 The “ferrade”.....	9
	3.5 The “toro piscine”.....	10
	3.6 Bullfighting events in the streets: The “encierro”, the “bandido” and “abrivado”.....	10
	3.7 Accidents”.....	11
4.	Threats to the physical and psychological integrity of minors.....	12
	4.1 Risks to the physical integrity of children.....	12
	4.2 Risks to the psychological integrity of children.....	13
	4.2.1 Risk of trauma.....	13
	4.2.2 Habituation to violence.....	14
	4.2.3 Undermining the sense of right and wrong.....	15
	4.2.4 Obstacle to child development.....	15
5.	Bullfighting schools.....	16
6.	Thematic report of 2016.....	21
7.	Current French legislation on bullfighting and children.....	22
8.	Measures taken since the recommendations of 2016.....	22
	8.1 Law Proposal by Samantha Cazebonne.....	22
	8.2 Regional initiative to prohibit the access of minors to bullfighting.....	23
	8.3 Judiciary actions taken to protect minors from bullfighting.....	23
9.	Violations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.....	24
	9.1 Best interests of the Child (Article 3).....	24
	9.2 Right to life (Article 6).....	25
	9.3 Protection against violence (Article 19).....	25
	9.4 Protection of health and the right to an adequate standard of living..... (Articles 24 and 27)	25
	9.5 Education (Article 29).....	25
	9.6 Leisure, recreational and cultural activities (Article 31).....	25
	9.7 Child labour and other forms of exploitation (Articles 32 and 36).....	26

10. Violation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.....	26
10.1 Goal 3 – Good Health.....	26
10.2 Goal 4 – Quality Education.....	26
11. Conclusion and recommendations.....	27

o. Summary

The following report is presented by Fondation Franz Weber (FFW), a Swiss-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), to the United Nations (UN) Committee of the Rights of the Child, regarding the continuing existence of bullfighting practices in France involving children and adolescents less than 18 years of age. It follows and complements a first report produced by FFW to the same Committee in 2014, preceding the periodic report of France in 2015 and the Committee's observations of 2016.

This report shows that minors in France are regularly exposed to violence, as spectators or active participants, in bullfighting and bullfighting events, and that these practices are a threat to their physical and mental development and well-being.

Political will to implement the 2016 Committee's observations is lacking in France. The country must therefore be reminded of its obligations under the Convention and asked to implement the Committee's observations, as other countries have been required to do.

1. Methodology

The chief sources of information include on-site observation, press articles, documents from the bullfighting industry, publications on bullfighting events, television reports and public interviews, video footage obtained by bullfighting aficionados and social networks. An in-depth investigation within the bullfighting industry was also conducted, corroborating all information, including data on bullfighting schools.

2. Introduction

In the past few years, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued a number of observations on the periodic reports of several countries¹ that still practice bullfighting, stressing the importance of keeping minors away from the violence of bullfighting, both as participants and as spectators. The Committee stressed in particular that the *"fact that children are involved in training for bullfighting and associated performances, (...) entails a high risk of accidents and severe injuries"*, and that *"child spectators are exposed to the extreme violence of bullfighting"*².

In February 2016, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of France. The Committee expressed its concern about *"the physical and mental well-being and development of children exposed to violence, including on television and in certain performances, such as bullfighting"*. It also recommended that France *"increase efforts to change violent traditions and practices that negatively affect the well-being of children, including by prohibiting children's access to bullfighting and associated performances"*.

Bullfighting is still allowed in France under Article 251-1 of the Criminal Code (Code Pénal), which states that although acts of cruelty against an animal are prohibited and severely punished, these practices are authorised if they are perpetuated during a bullfighting event and if an "uninterrupted local tradition" can be demonstrated. Moreover, and despite the Committee on the Rights of the Child's observations, the State Party has adopted no

¹ The Committee on the Rights of the Child issued such observations regarding Mexico (2015), Colombia (2015), Peru (2016), France (2016), Ecuador (2017), Spain (2018) and Portugal (2019). Only Venezuela has yet to receive a similar recommendation.

² See concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Peru : CRC/C/PER/CO/4-5.

appropriate legislative and administrative measure to protect the physical and mental well-being of children exposed to bullfighting.

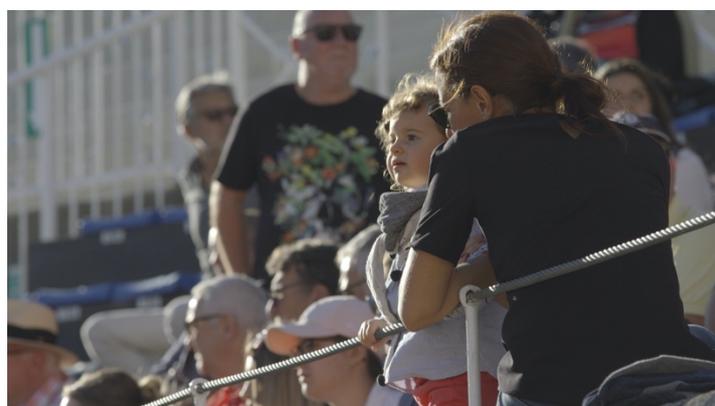
To this day, France has taken no action to adapt its laws according to the 2016 observations of the Committee. To the contrary: the bullfighting community is concentrating its efforts on maintaining this 'culture' in the South of France. The '*aficionados*' (bullfighting enthusiasts) represent an ageing public and, in order to maintain this practice, are compelled to attract the younger generations. Maintaining the access of minors to bullfights is therefore their priority, as is ensuring the sustainability of bullfighting schools.

As we have seen from the various bullfighting publications and programmes accessible via social networks and websites (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube...), children are at the heart of the bullfighting industry's strategy to keep the bullfighting culture alive. However, as shown by a poll lead by the Institut d'Etudes Opinion et Marketing en France et à l'International (IFOP), published on November 29th, 2019³, 86% of the French population are in favour of banning minors from bullfighting and 74% of French people are in favour of a total ban on bullfighting in France.

Paradoxically, with the help (and funding) of cities and local authorities, all parties that have invested interests in bullfighting are supported to develop a number of schemes to spread bullfighting culture among minors. For example, the city of Nîmes does not hide its support for programs and workshops for schoolchildren from kindergarten to high school, offered by the museum of bullfighting cultures. During these educational workshops, the children learn to integrate bullfighting culture, through different activities: painting and sculptures on bullfighting themes, reading bullfighting tales... The objective is to anchor bullfighting in the collective subconscious.

In addition to individual initiatives, two bodies, the Union des Villes Taurines (UVTF) and the Observatoire National des Cultures Taurines (ONCT), are actively conducting various campaigns and projects to ensure this transmission of bullfighting culture to minors.

Because of these various efforts from the bullfighting industry, young children and adolescents are frequently exposed to bullfighting, theoretically and practically, as spectators (in school, during live events or on TV) and as active participants. In particular, the inclusion of minors in bullfighting schools and hands-on classes, as well as dangerous bullfighting events, seriously endangers their physical health, and most likely jeopardises their physical, mental, spiritual and moral development⁴.



Young child at a bullfight in France.

³ <https://www.ifop.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/116834-Rapport.pdf>

⁴ <http://ddata.over-blog.com/3/92/63/91/Effects-of-Vewing-Videos-of-Bullfights.pdf>

3. Types of bullfighting events in France

In France, the types and nature of bullfighting events vary from one region to region and, to some extent, differ from the Spanish and Portuguese disciplines. Prevailing practices are extremely dangerous, as this section demonstrates.

It is essential to distinguish the different types of bullfighting events practiced in France, each with its own characteristics, as they are not all comparable in terms of danger and violence for both humans and animals. Dozens of bullfighting traditions exist between the south-west and the south-east of France, and this report strives to enumerate the main types of events.

It is important to note that bullfighting schools offer classes to minors for almost each type of bullfight and bullfighting event.

3.1 Corridas

Traditional corridas, in which a bull is fought either on foot and/or on a horse in an arena, are allowed under Article 251-1 of the Criminal Code (Code Pénal) in 10 ‘Départements’ (regions): Aude, Bouches-du-Rhône, Gard, Gers, Gironde, Hérault, Landes, Pyrénées-Atlantiques, Hautes-Pyrénées et Pyrénées-Orientales. The bull is put to death in the vast majority of cases.

In France, there are three types of bullfighting: bullfighting on foot, of Spanish origin, bullfighting on horseback, also of Spanish origin, with killing in public (rejoneo), and Portuguese bullfighting: on horseback, but without public killing (the bull is killed at the end of the ‘show’, outside of the arena, either with the help of a ‘matador’, a slaughterhouse pistol or a bullet in the head).

During the corridas, participants and animals are exposed to grave dangers, in particular of being hit/gored by the bull or trampled by the bull or the horses. They usually suffer concussions, various serious or superficial wounds due to the bull’s horns, etc. The spectators are also at risk of injury, before and during the event, as well as psychological trauma when they witness serious accidents within the arena.

Accidents involving participants and spectators are frequent and sometimes fatal as shown by the following examples:

- June 2017: a bullfighter was killed after being gored by a bull’s horn in Aire-sur-l’Adour (Landes)⁵;
- September 2019: a bullfighter was severely injured to the coronary artery in the arena of Bayonne (Pyrénées-Atlantiques);
- May 2019: 6 people were injured when a bull escaped the truck as it was being led to the arena of Vergèze (Gard);
- Spring 2019: during a corrida ‘demo’ for children in Arles, an instructor was charged by a bull and suffered a concussion and remained several minutes totally unconscious, in front of various schools and young children⁶.

Furthermore, the death of either the bull or the ‘torero’ is the main attraction of a bullfight, being one of the last ‘shows’ on earth during which the spectators can actually experience a

⁵<https://www.tdg.ch/monde/faits-divers/matador-36-ans-meurt-corrída/story/13693561>

⁶<https://www.tf1.fr/tmc/quotidien-avec-yann-barthes/videos/corrída-bien-adapte-a-un-jeune-public.html>

close proximity to death. **As a result, violence and death are showcased as ‘artistic and aesthetic’, thus trivialised and normalised.**



Accident during a corrida in France, involving a young ‘torero’.

3.2 The ‘course camarguaise’

The ‘course camarguaise’ is practiced in the South-East of France, more particularly in the regions of Gard, of Hérault, of the Bouches-du-Rhône and of some parts of Vaucluse. It involves grabbing various objects that are fastened to the bull’s head (a ribbon on the middle of its forehead and tassels or strings tied to its horns).

The ‘course camarguaise’ does not involve killing the bull, but the spectacle is nevertheless stressful and brutal for the animal. The bull shows his distress by regularly trying to jump out of the arena, mooing, scratching the ground in sign of irritation, and charging. Each bull is harassed for 15 minutes by a swarm of people, ‘raseteurs’, who try to snatch the attributes or cockade on his head with a hook to win the corresponding prize. Exasperated and exhausted from running in vain after their assailants, bulls - especially young, inexperienced bulls often injure themselves by charging headfirst the protective fences or jumping over them (old bulls being used to exercise, prefer to mimic the charges without getting too tired and especially without throwing themselves against the fences, since they know it is painful). **This can prove extremely dangerous to the spectators, including children standing just on the other side of these fences.** Indeed, the barriers separating the arena and the counter-track are lower than in arenas reserved for bullfights alone. Although, luckily, these accidents remain rare, they do occur, as demonstrated in 2015 in an arena in Saint-Chartes⁷.

During the ‘course camarguaise’, the participants do not wear any protective gear. As such, they may sustain serious injuries caused by the bull’s horns or when falling while trying to find shelter. Since they cannot hide behind the ‘burladeros’ - wooden shelters built on the barriers between the bullring and the counter-track - as bullfighters do to catch their breath, the raseteurs have to make spectacular jumps against the embankments with the bull on their heels. Any mistake is therefore potentially fatal.

There are schools that teach the ‘course camarguaise’, such as the School of ‘Raseteurs’ of Arles⁸.

It is important to note that, surprisingly, the Camargue people, both the public and the breeders, say they venerate the “bull god to whom they devote their lives”. The Manade

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN86iOxJ1TI>

⁸ <http://ecole-raseteur-arles.e-monsite.com/>

Raynaud, one of the oldest and most important Camargue racing bull farms, has the reputation of keeping its champion bulls for the rest of their lives. The latter are handled by osteopaths to heal the wounds induced during the race, and are “buried and mourned like men, standing, facing the sea”. **It is important to underline the emotional paradox in which children are raised in relation to bulls: from childhood, children learn to love an animal while remaining indifferent to its distress.**



A bull tries to escape during a 'course camarguaise'

3.3 The 'course landaise'

The 'course landaise' is practiced in the regions of Landes and Gers. It involves female fighting cows of a Spanish breed, and, more rarely, bulls. The 'écarteurs' wait for the cow in the arena. They then dodge the cow at the last minute, making a leap of sorts.

These fights induce injuries to around 40 people every year, mainly from hitting the ground. The so-called 'mixed' Landes races, **that are open to minors**, have the uniqueness of allowing the public to play with the cows. This is dangerous given the inexperience of the participants and the fact that they often engage in this activity under the influence of alcohol. Several 'games' involving the public are possible during these races:

- The most daring can take part in a football match in the arena while a cow is unleashed, while a dozen or so young women sit motionless under an umbrella for the duration of the match, being grazed by the animal and risking being attacked at any moment.
- The 'jeu de la poutre' involves a sort of rocking gallows: as a cow is released, two people stand on either side of a beam. When the cow charges one of the participants, the other has to pull with all his strength on the pulley in order to lift his teammate off the ground and thus prevent him from being hit – and vice versa. If one of the participants is unable to lift the other, the impact with the animal, weighing about 300 kilos, is inevitable.

The Fédération Française de la Course Landaise provides classes of this discipline to minors⁹.

3.4 The 'ferrades'

This slightly separate tradition is intimately linked to bullfighting culture. The 'ferrade' consists of branding cattle or horses with a red iron. Particularly cruel and outdated (several painless alternatives are now available), this technique aims to identify the animal by branding

⁹ <http://www.courselandaise.org/128-L-ecole-taurine.html>

the year of birth, its breeding number and the symbol of the breeder, using a red-hot iron. It is often coupled by cutting off a piece of ear – without anaesthetics – which is then often offered to children who participate in the ritual. Bullfighting bull breeders practice it on all their animals but rarely make a feast of it. However, the Camargues (and sometimes Landais) bull breeders have made it a real spectacle, in which children, like apprentices in a rite of passage, are actively invited to participate.

The Raynaud Manade mentioned above, for example, organises this type of ‘festivity’ several times a year. The most famous of these events, the ‘day of the Raynaud Manade’, sees several hundred people arrive by boat on the farm. The spectators come to see calves of about one year old pursued by several riders, that are hit by a trident (a long stick with a 3-headed spike to guide the cattle) and then violently thrown to the ground. The children are as close as possible to the action, because once the calf has fallen to the ground, it is their role (and some who do this are sometimes less than 10 years old) to throw themselves on the animal in order to hold it down and immobilise it. Branding takes several seconds to complete and in several places as the animal typically screams in pain and tries to pull free. The animal’s distress does not seem to disturb some children, who have become used to this type of ‘show’ since they were very young. Others show disgust, especially at the sight of blood when the ears are cut off. **The violence of the process is completely normalised, and children are desensitised to it.**



Young adolescents and children trying to immobilise a young bull.

These events, which take place everywhere in the south-east of France, present **grave dangers to the children who are either spectators or active participants**. Children may be hit or crushed by the horses, or may be hit by the unfortunate calf in its desperate attempt to escape its executioners. Several incidents have occurred recently where herded adult bulls have escaped the control of the riders, leading to a panicked rush of spectators.

The omnipresence of risk and its acceptance, like the glorification of physical courage, is an integral part of the bullfighting way of life and thinking. In order to understand the ‘bullfighting state of mind’, it is essential to bear in mind that for the followers of bullfighting, from the most difficult to the least violent, danger is not perceived as something to be avoided but, on the contrary, to be faced. **It is in this spirit that children are brought up. They develop a twisted relationship with pain, life and death.** Many young apprentice bullfighters from bullfighting schools or Camargue racing schools must declare that they are “ready to die in the arena”, because it is a dignified and passionate death of a “fighter”.

3.5 The “toro piscine”

This tradition, that does not involve killing of the bull, is extremely popular in the south of France as it allows amateurs to play with cows whose horn tips have been wrapped to avoid

serious injuries. Inflatable ‘pools’ are set up to add to the “entertainment”. Therefore, anyone, including very young children can participate in these events during village festivals (some mayors require controls and minimum ages, but often ‘toro piscines’ are totally lawless). **Excited, often drunk and not always accustomed to thwarting the charges of a cow, the minors are often hit and violently thrown into the air by the animals, who are furious with stress and rage.**



Accident during a “toro piscine” involving a young adolescent

3.6 Bullfighting events in the streets: The ‘encierro’, the ‘bandido’ and ‘abrivado’

During ‘encierro’, ‘bandido’ and ‘abrivado’, bulls are released into the city and run in the streets or along the beach. Originally from Spain but rarely practiced in France (except in some cities such as Arles), the encierro is a relic of the past where bulls had to be led on foot from the corrales to the arenas for bullfights, since there was no other means of transport. This has become a festive ritual, as people run with the frantic bulls through the streets blocked for the occasion. In France, the ‘bandido’ and ‘abrivado’ are the local versions of the ‘encierro’, the Provençal words having replaced the Spanish term.

More specifically, the ‘abrivado’ is the act of driving the bulls on horseback through the streets, the countryside or the beach to the bullring. The ‘bandido’ is the act of riding the bulls back to their pastures after the races. In ‘abrivado’ and ‘bandido’, the danger comes from the fact that the aim of the so-called ‘atrapaires’ – **young people, sometimes minors, who try to prove their bravery by attempting to catch the bulls by the horns or tail** – is to disrupt the escape of the horse herdsman who are herding the bulls.

These brutal attempts to express virility against adult bulls weighing more than 400 kilos are particularly risky. The danger also comes from the horses, which the ‘atrapaires’ also try to catch or destabilise. Being thrown at full gallop, they can hit or crush those who are in their path. Often, it is the age of the bull that affects the safety the most. Inexperienced young bulls are more dangerous than old ones because they panic and try to escape. If the horsemen who supervise the race are unable to intercept them and control the cavalcade, the bulls may run into the crowd. **Many small children attend these events and therefore are put at direct risk to be hit by a bull and have nowhere to take shelter in the case of an escaping animal.**

These events put the participants and the spectators at considerable risk. The biggest cities of the south-east (Nîmes, Arles etc) mark the path of the bull by cutting off streets with carts or barriers, which also prevents ambulances or first aid providers to access the site. However, it at least allows for some control of the bulls. Yet, some villages practice ‘wild’ releases, without barriers or protections (Vauvert, le Cailar, Saintes-Marie-de-la-Mer, etc.), which are even more dangerous. Most of the time, the bull is also fought in an arena after the preliminary ‘race’ in

the city. 'Rope bullfighting', or 'encierro à l'Eyrarguaise' has been prohibited since 2015, after a court ruling deemed it to be excessively dangerous and harmful to animals.



A young woman being hit by a bull in an arena

3.7 Accidents

Accidents are frequent and serious, as the following examples show:

- 2014: fatal accident during the bandido of Aigues-Mortes (Bouches-du-Rhône);
- June 2015: a man died during an encierro in Saint-Maurice-de-Cazeville (Gard);
- **July 2015: a 15-year-old child was killed during a bandido in St-Martin-de-Crau (Bouches-du-Rhône). He was hit to the head ¹⁰by the hooves of a horse as he was taking part in the bandido and running in the streets after a bull;**
- June 2018: a young man was injured to the head during a bandido in Grau-du-Roi (Gard);
- August 2018: a woman died after being hit by a bull during an encierro in Castries (Hérault);
- August 2018: a young man was injured during the bandido of Saint-Georges d'Orques (Hérault);
- October 2018: a woman died after being hit by a bull during a feria in Aigues-Mortes (Gard);
- June 2019: a man was seriously injured during an encierro in Caissargues (Gard);

In recent years, the number of incidents has increased to such an extent that insurers of these events have increased the amount of civil liability premiums five-fold. For example, since 2013, the insurance company, Groupama, is said to have covered more than 6 million euros in claims, i.e. 6 times more than the amount of premiums collected and compensated to 24 victims of bodily injury¹¹.

¹⁰ <https://www.laprovence.com/article/edition-arles/3516253/quentin-15-ans-fauche-par-une-bandido-mortelle.html>

¹¹ <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/occitanie/gard/nimes/gard-manadiers-guerre-contre-hausse-primes-assureurs-jeux-taurins-1789313.html>

4 Threats to the physical and psychological integrity of minors

4.1 Risk to the physical integrity of children

Minors are exposed to several threats during a corrida or other bullfighting events, be it as spectators or active participants. Bullfighting schools are particularly problematic for the health of children and their moral and psychological development.

During a bullfighting event such as a ‘encierro’ or a ‘bandido’, children are exposed to various injuries as they stand in direct proximity to the bulls before, during and after they are released in the street. Minors can be seen on the trucks holding the bulls before the event, on mere wooden planks over the animals, as these bulls are poked with various objects, including electric rods, in order to ‘excite’ them.

When the bull is running through the streets, the spectators and participants risk being hit by the animal, gored by its horns, or trampled during a human panic movement, etc. Adolescents very often take part in these events to ‘test’ their skills and courage. Accidents also occur with animals, ridden behind the bull, as was the case in July 2015, when a 15-year-old child was killed following an injury to the head caused by the hooves of a horse, while he was taking part in a bandido in St-Martin-de-Crau (Bouches-du-Rhône)¹².

A corrida, ‘course landaise’ or ‘course camarguaise’ also poses threats to the physical well-being of children. As explained in the following section (‘bullfighting schools’), children from the age of 8 actively take part in bullfighting events. They are exposed to many types of injuries, such as wounds by bull horns (75% of the wounds, according to a study led by Dr. Ramon Vila Limenez in Spain from 1970 to 1980), as well as injuries caused by falling down or making poor landings for example in a ‘course landaise’, and, in some cases, more serious injuries such as cranial trauma. The spectators are also at physical risk, since the animals sometimes escape either the truck at their arrival or from the arena at some time during the event.

Bull horn injuries (‘cornadas’) are especially dangerous since these wounds tend to get infected (around 42% infection rate). Indeed, when the horn goes through the clothes, and then through the skin, it carries the accumulated debris (sand, wood, splinters, horn, blood, etc.). ‘Cornadas’ can also cause intestinal perforations and vascular injuries, which may sometimes be hidden by what appears to be a simple bruise from the outside.



An adolescent is hit by a bull during an ‘abrivado’ in Sainte-Marie-de-la-Mer – Children are also present with no age limitation at these types of events

¹²<https://www.laprovence.com/article/edition-arles/3516253/quentin-15-ans-fauche-par-une-bandido-mortelle.html>

4.2 Risks to the psychological integrity of children

The scientific and educational communities are deeply concerned by the exposure of children to shows that contain the level of violence shown in bullfighting events. Child psychologists and psychiatrists, in particular Professors Hubert Montagner¹³, Joël Lequesne¹⁴ and Jean-Paul Richier¹⁵, consider that children who watch and participate in bullfighting events are exposed to a variety of psychological risks exposed below. In France, a number of child psychiatrists and psychologists have come together and formed an association, PROTEC (PROTégeons les Enfants des Corridas). Although they regularly publish articles and opinions, their conviction that minors should be held at a distance from bullfighting in general is ignored by the State.



A young adolescent being hit by a young bull during a bullfighting event

4.2.1 Risk of trauma

According to many authors, the presence of children during bullfighting events, the broadcast of said events on TV and the participation of minors in bullfighting via bullfighting schools endangers their normal development.

Children are particularly sensitive to what happens to the weakest. They thus naturally empathise with the animals. When children witness an animal being killed, they see the animal's innocence as well as the lack of compassion and the approving excitement of the public and of their close friends and family. The contradictions they have to deal with at bullfighting events (this natural empathy, the 'deification' of the bull and, simultaneously, the ill treatment they witness or participate in) creates an emotional imbalance.

Furthermore, children subject to such violence find it extremely difficult to let their relatives know about the psychological consequences, because their family members are usually aficionados. In consequence, and in absence of concrete political will to investigate this question, there is a general lack of data on the effective trauma suffered by minors in relation with bullfighting and bullfighting events.

¹³<http://www.veterinaires-anticorrida.fr/article-prise-de-position-du-pr-hubert-montagner-97293221.html>

¹⁴https://www.afpen.fr/IMG/pdf/empathie_a_l_epreuve_du_specisme_j_lequesne.pdf

¹⁵ Dr. J-P Richier, psychiatrist, *Dos bullfighting represent a psychological danger for young spectators ?*, June 2008 (<https://fr.slideshare.net/MartaEstebanMiano/jp-richier-bullfights-and-children>).



A very young boy dressed as a 'torero' playing with the corpse of a bull after a corrida

According to Professor Hubert Montagner¹⁶, “the injury inflicted upon the bull with the banderillas, the sword, and then the blood that gushes out, and the desperate attempts of the bull to escape, the suffering that leads to the animal’s death, are disturbing for many children, especially emotional, nervous and anxious children”. This specialist believes that “the death of an animal always leads to sleeping disorders in children, and the wounds inflicted upon the bull may be part of a truly traumatic experience for children”.¹⁷

Psychiatrists and psychologists in neighbouring countries have also determined that bullfights are detrimental to the psyche of children, especially when adults ignore the animal’s suffering. According to a report of the Complutense University of Madrid, there is a close relationship between the presence of children at bullfights and the increase in aggressiveness of children, as well as anxiety and emotional shock.¹⁸

4.2.2 Habituation to violence

Children who watch or participate in bullfights are exposed to an extremely serious form of violence. The traditional or cultural aspect of this kind of event does not make it any less cruel or reduce its potential for trauma. To the contrary, the cultural nature of the events validates the violence and ill treatment inflicted on the animals.

The Observatoire de la Violence Educative Ordinaire (OVEO)¹⁹ describes bullfighting as an introductory course to violence.²⁰ Furthermore, according to a recent article published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health²¹, “violence towards animals and violence towards people are often interconnected problems”, and “violence towards animals is a strong predictor that the abuser may inflict violence on people”. The same study finds that children may “indirectly have experienced the effects of abuse” by witnessing animal cruelty or violence.

¹⁶ Prof. Hubert Montagner is a psychophysiological and former University professor in Psychology. He specializes in the development, behaviour and rhythms of the child. He is the former Research Director at the Institution nationale de la santé et de la recherche médicale of France.

¹⁷ www.animal-justice-droit.org/corrida.html

¹⁸ J.L. GRAÑA, J.M. ANDREU, M.J. MUÑOZ-RIVAS, M.E. PEÑA and P.F. BRAIN, *Effects of Viewing Videos of Bullfights on Spanish Children*, *Aggressive Behavior* Volume 30, pages 16-28 (2004).

¹⁹ The OVEO’s aim is “to encourage, develop and promote as widely as possible the provision of information to public opinion and political leaders on the practice of ordinary educational violence, i.e. the various forms of violence used daily in families, schools, institutions and throughout society to educate children”.

²⁰ <https://www.oveo.org/la-corrída-une-éducation-a-la-violence/>

²¹ Brinda JEGATHEESAN, Marie-Jose ENDERS-SLEDGERS, Elizabeth ORMEROD and Paula BOYDEN, *Understanding the Link between Animal Cruelty and Family Violence: The Bioecological Systems Model*, *Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2020).

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/9/3116>

4.2.3 Undermining the sense of right and wrong

Bullfights send a harmful message to children, at a stage when they are developing as people, learning what is right and wrong, and becoming ethically mature. In the bullfighting culture, it is completely legitimate to sacrifice a living being for entertainment purposes. The violence of bullfights and bullfighting events is not only recognised – it is encouraged and valued. The violence and suffering inflicted on an animal is therefore trivialised, and the sense of right and wrong inherent to children is put in jeopardy. According to Professor Joël Lesquesne, there is a clear relationship between this sacrificial aspect of bullfighting and adolescent/young adult practices that can be considered as rituals, such as ‘happy slapping’ (practice of filming the physical assault of a person).²²



Adolescents “play” with a young bull during a ‘toro piscine’

4.2.4 Obstacle to child development

In conclusion, the presence of children at bullfights and bullfighting events, the broadcast of these events on TV and the participation of minors in bullfighting via bullfighting schools, endangers the development of these children. A report established by Mrs. Claire Brissent, children’s rights defender, to Dominique Perben, Minister of Justice in December 2002²³, highlights that the portrayal of violence in bullfighting culture undermines the confidence that children have in their role models and adults in general. According to this report, *“while it is extremely difficult to determine that there is a linear cause-and-effect relationship, violent images and messages may nevertheless restructure the child’s personality in a way that impedes their development. The child may lose confidence in the adult who subjected them to, or who let them see scenes that they cannot understand. Subsequently, the child may have a terribly difficult time identifying with these adults”*.

Children grasp the violence of bullfighting, and even at a very young age, understand that the bull is forced to come into the arena, and that it is wounded for an extended period of time before being killed for entertainment purposes. The above-mentioned Brisset report indicates that *“the most intolerable violent images are those that are devoid of meaning – images that portray violence as a gratuitous undertaking involving destruction, sacrifice and submission, without justification”*.

²² Joël LESQUESNE, *L’enfant face à la Corrida : quel impact psychologique?*, Revue « Fédérer », Information notice of the Fédération Française des Psychologues et de Psychologie, nr. 73, March 2014.

²³ <https://www.vie-publique.fr/rapport/25759-les-enfants-face-aux-images-et-aux-messages-violents-diffuses-par-les-di>

This being said, it is very difficult to establish a clear and undisputable link between exposing children to bullfights and bullfighting events, and psychological trauma. There are very little studies or statistics on this matter. This situation mainly stems from the fact many children do not dare speak out against family traditions for fear of being marginalised within their families. In order to build themselves up, children have a strong need to feel assimilated. Some cry during the bullfight or admit that they do not like the blood or the idea of the bull dying, but they generally do not show similar feelings to their families.

5. Bullfighting schools

At a very young age, children are enticed into the bullfighting culture. The enlistment of children into bullfighting – and bullfighting schools – is very subtle. Bullfighting is assimilated to a theatre of life where everything is aestheticised. During their first approaches, partisans of bullfighting wishing to ‘convert’ new recruits carefully avoid sensible subjects: they put killing, spikes and banderillas in the background, preferring to show the freedom that bulls enjoy on the farms and the beauty of the folklore, insisting, to legitimise it, on its ancient origins. Underlining the fact that it is a culture shared by many, the partisans of bullfighting present bullfighting as a social and cultural cement. This picture of bullfighting culture holds a dangerous attraction for young people in search of identity.

Through this romanticised glorification of cruelty, virility is exalted and every accessory is carefully shown for its beauty (embroidered ‘habits de lumière’ that sparkle with a thousand lights, swords, beautiful horses, contrast of colours, careful architecture and decoration of the arenas...). In the rejoneo - bullfights on horseback – for example, the sharp points of the banderillas, a kind of harpoon about 4 centimetres long that the rider puts in the bull's back, are often hidden under beautiful red paper flowers.



Banderilla embellished' by flowers to hide the cruelty of the weapon

There are a large number of private and public bullfighting schools, some specializing in ‘course landaise’ or ‘course camarguaise’.

The following chart strives to give references to some of them:

Name of the school	City	Type of school	Age of students	Website
Ecole taurine Pays d'Arles	Arles	Public	From 8 years old	https://www.facebook.com/Ecoletaurinearles/
Rhône Aficion	Fourques	Private		https://www.facebook.com/pg/Ecole-taurine-Rh%C3%B4ne-Aficion-%C3%B2n-

				984146231974632/about/?ref=page_internal
Centre français de tauromachie	Garons	Public	Between 8 and 20 years old	https://www.cftauromachie.com/Ce-que-propose-le-Centre-Francais-de-Tauromachie_a49.html
Adour Aficion	Cauna	Private	No information available	https://ericdepecker.wixsite.com/adour-aficion Note: in an interview, the founder of the school admitted that one of its 16-year-old students was injured by a bull horn to the leg ²⁴
Ecole taurine de Nîmes	Nîmes	Public	No minimal age requirement, children from the age of 7 at least are accepted.	https://www.ctnimes.com/
Ecole taurine Beziers méditerranée	Beziers	Private		https://www.facebook.com/pg/Ecole-Taurine-B%C3%A9ziers-M%C3%A9diterran%C3%A9e-1456449247978639/events/?ref=page_internal
Ecole taurine de la Fédération Française de la Course Lansaise	Aubagnan	Private	Between 13 and 25 years old.	http://www.courselandaise.org/128-L-ecole-taurine.html
Ecole de raseteurs d'Arles	Arles	Private	Minimum age: 8 years old.	http://ecole-raseteur-arles.e-monsite.com/

Whether for the pleasure of learning Spanish bullfighting and doing an extra-curricular activity that is out of the ordinary, or to become a professional bullfighter, dozens of children enrol every year in bullfighting schools in France to learn the basics of bullfighting on foot. The most popular ones, for those who are considering a career as a professional bullfighter, are those in the south-east of France, because they have more financial means, they allow ‘hands-on’ training with cattle, and not just to make passes in the void between friends. It is not necessary to go through the bullfighting school to become matador de toro or rejoneador (bullfighter on horseback. There is no school in France for the rejoneo) – a multitude of famous bullfighters have learned the trade without going to the bullfighting school. However, schools offer good training conditions and are therefore the favoured choice.

As in the Camargue race, the bullfighter apprentices are educated to “*respect and venerate the toro*”. Blinded by their own desire for glory, they never perceive their opponent as a being capable of feeling pain. **Thus, they never show the slightest sadness in the face of the distress of those they are called upon to kill. Never, in spite of their alleged “respect and love for the animal”, do they show the least sign of compassion in the face of its suffering, which they always tend to minimise and justify.**

²⁴<https://rue89bordeaux.com/2014/08/lecole-taurine-forme-rambo-danseuses-etoiles/>

Some schools impose a minimal age to start killing young bulls, others are far more lenient. As the teachers say, it all depends on the physical ability and mastery of the student. Therefore, some will kill for the first time at the age of 12, while others will have to wait until they are 18 for their first kill.

Technically, a traditional ‘corrida’ has three parts, or three ‘thirds’ (‘tercios’). Students of bullfighting schools must learn to master each ‘tercio’:

1. During the first ‘tercio’, the ‘picador’ sits on a blindfolded horse. His role is to weaken the bull by tiring and wounding the animal with a long spear that ends with a 10 cm long spike, the ‘puya’.
2. The second ‘tercio, or ‘tercio de banderilles’ implies inserting ‘banderilles’ – 4 cm long colourfull harpoons – into the flesh of the bull. Once inserted, these spikes cannot come out and inflict constant pain to the animal, whith the aim of driving it insane with suffering. The bullfighting schools’ students are required to learn to use the ‘banderilles’ effectively. **This process is particularly dangerous, because it implies to place oneself in front of the animal while it is charging.**
3. In the third ‘tercio’, or ‘death tercio’, the ‘matador’ places himself in front of the bull, lowers his cape, enticing the animal to charge. His mission is to inflict the death-blow – a sword blow to the base of the skull to ensure a quick death. A bull weighs several hundreds of kilos. Even wounded and tired, it is capable of killing the ‘torero’. **This phase is particularly difficult to master for the students, and accidents are frequent.** Quick deaths are rare, and the ‘matador’ therefore often needs several tries before inflicting the decisive blow. When the ‘torero’ cannot kill the bull in one blow, the ‘descabello’ takes place, during which the ‘torero’ faces the weakened bull and hits the animal on the skull with a sword named ‘verdugo’ (that presents a 90 degree angle at the time, to kill it. Once the bull is down, a bullfighter's assistant called ‘puntillero’, named after his dagger, ‘the puntilla’, rushes to finish off the animal. At the bullfighting school, the students do not handle the puntilla themselves during their training to put the bull to death and they are always assisted by a professional puntillero.



A young ‘torero’ prepares to deliver the death blow

In summary, during their training in the bullfighting schools, participants of corridas, sometimes young adults, adolescents or even younger children, use a variety of dangerous tools, including the following:

- Puya: a pointed instrument used by ‘picadors’ on horses to spear the bull and pierce the animal’s flesh at the base of the neck, causing wounds up to 20 cm deep. The aim of this action is to prevent bulls from being able to lift their head during the fight, as

the pain produced by the wounds and the bleeding onto the muscles of the region, near the spinal column, forces them to keep their neck in a straight line.

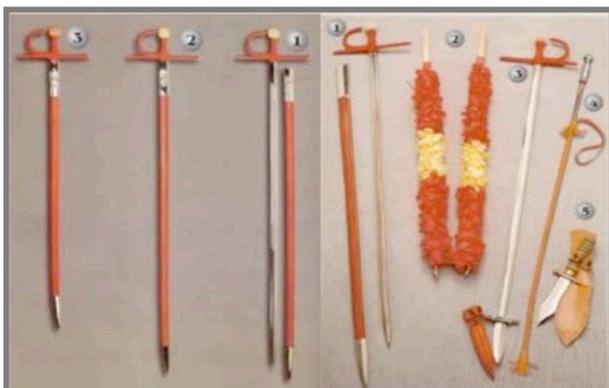
- **Banderillas:** the bullfighter drives these weapons, which have a sharp harpoon-like point, into the animal's back, where they are designed to catch on and remain stuck in the internal tissue, in such a way that the bull's movement in the ring causes the banderillas to tear at the flesh even more.
- **Rejon de muerte:** weapons used to hurt the bull in the bullfighting spectacle known as the rejoneo. The rejon de muerte has a blade between 60-65 cm long and must be introduced into the bull's upper back area by a person on horseback. Most bullfighting websites recommend a 'slow introduction' of the blade into the bull's body.
- **Espada or estoque:** the bullfighter kills the bull with the sword. The bullfighter will try to reach the heart. Often, the sword may be plunged many times into the same area, destroying the lungs or other internal organs and causing the animal to vomit blood.
- **Puntilla:** if after one or more blows with the estoque the bull collapses but does not die, the animal is systematically killed using the puntilla dagger. The dagger is plunged into the nape of the bull and used to cut the spinal cord. This will immobilise the animal from the neck down and will then cause his death.



Banderillas¹



Puya³



Estoque²



Rejones⁴

Photos of the Ecole taurine Pays d'Arles (taken from the Facebook page²⁵)



Young student showing off the ears of the bull he has just defeated.



Young child during a bullfighting class – the risk of being hit or trampled by the young bull is very real.

6. Thematic report of 2016

France's last report, as required by Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on January 28th 2015. It made absolutely no mention of bullfighting as possibly problematic in relation with the Convention.²⁶ Fondation Franz Weber had submitted a first report on children and bullfighting in France to the Committee in 2014.

On February 23rd, 2016, the Committee published its concluding observations on France's fifth periodic report²⁷. Regarding children and bullfighting, the Committee expressed its concerns about *“the lack of a comprehensive strategy addressing all forms of violence against children and the high and increasing incidence of domestic violence and gender-based violence in the State party. The Committee is also concerned about:*

(...)

²⁵<https://www.facebook.com/Ecoletaurinearles/>

²⁶https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fFRA%2f5&Lang=en

²⁷CRC/C/FRA/CO/5 ;

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fFRA%2fCO%2f5&Lang=en

(d) *The physical and mental well-being and development of children exposed to violence, **including on television and in certain performances, such as bullfighting.***

Therefore, “recalling the Committee’s general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, **the Committee recommend(ed) that the State party expedite the adoption of a comprehensive strategy to prevent and counter all forms of violence against children, within the overall policy of child protection. It also recommends that the State party:**

(...)

(f) ***Increase efforts to change violent traditions and practices that negatively affect the well-being of children, including by prohibiting children’s access to bullfighting and associated performances.***

The Committee also made similar recommendations to other member States in which bullfighting is allowed. In particular, in 2019, the Committee, in its final observations on the periodic report of Portugal, indicated that:

*“The Committee recommends that the State party set the minimum age for participation in and assisting at bullfighting and bull-running events, including in bullfighting schools, **at 18 years, without exception,** and raise awareness among State officials, the media and the general population about **the negative effects on children, including as spectators, of the violence associated with bullfighting and bull-running**”.*²⁸

Such recommendations should apply to *any* country in which bullfighting occurs, in any form, and in particular to France.

7. Current French legislation on bullfighting and children

The French criminal legislation severely punishes acts of cruelty against an animal. According to Article 521-1 par. 1 of the French Penal Code (Crimes), *“the act, whether publicly or not, of inflicting serious harm, or of a sexual nature, or committing an act of cruelty to a domestic animal, or a tamed animal, or an animal held in captivity, is punishable by two years’ imprisonment and a fine of 30,000 euros”.*

However, an exception was introduced into the Penal Code, specifically allowing acts of cruelty against animals for ‘cultural’ reasons. Article 521-1 par. 7 of the Penal Code therefore states that the provisions of Article 521-1 *“shall not apply to bullfighting where an uninterrupted local tradition can be invoked. Nor shall they be applicable to cockfighting in localities where an unbroken tradition can be established”.*

According to the French State, the access of minors to bullfighting events and bullfights is not restricted by the Law and should remain a matter of parental authority only – the parents must therefore ensure that the Rights of the Child are ensured.

Similarly, there is no legislation in place limiting the access of minors to television broadcasts of bullfights. However, in 2012, the Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel (CSA), the French broadcasting authority, stated that *“broadcasts of bullfights or of excerpts of bullfights contain*

²⁸https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2FPRT%2FCO%2F5-6&Lang=en

scenes that could offend minors of 10 years of age, within the meaning of the recommendation dated 7 June 2005 on classifying programmes and rating systems for children”.²⁹ The CSA asked the channel TVP1 to rate its bullfighting broadcasts as category II (not advisable for children under 10 years of age), and not to broadcast the killing of the animal.

8. Measures taken by the French State since the recommendations of 2016

The State has taken **no measures to implement** the Committee’s concluding observations. In its latest report to the Committee, France has made **no mention of any efforts made to implement the Committee’s recommendations**.³⁰ One reason for this is a general taboo in France regarding ‘culture’, which means that political leaders do not want to address the issue of bullfighting in the south of France.

However, there have been some attempts at restricting the access to minors to bullfights and bullfighting events, listed below.

8.1. Law Proposal by Samantha Cazebonne

Samantha Cazebonne is a member of the political party *La République en Marche (LREM)* and was elected deputy of the French National Assembly in June 2017. She is working on a Law proposal to protect children from exposure to violence perpetrated on animals. Her idea is to modify Article 227-21-1 of the Penal Code as follows:

“Causing a minor to exercise, publicly or not, serious abuse, or to commit an act of cruelty towards a domestic animal, or a tamed animal, or an animal held in captivity is punishable by five years’ imprisonment and a fine of 150,000 euros. The same penalties shall be imposed on any natural or legal person who organizes or commits the acts referred to in paragraph 1 in the presence of a minor. The derogations provided for in paragraph 7 of article 521-1 of the Criminal Code shall not apply to this article”.³¹

Announced in the summer of 2019 by government spokeswoman Aurore Bergé and presented on 17 October by Mrs. Cazebonne, this proposal, supported by members of the majority, was not well enough substantiated. In the end, **it was not even submitted to the French Parliament**, despite strong media coverage and public opinion in favour of said proposal.

8.2. Regional initiative to prohibit the access of minors to bullfighting

As a major organiser of bullfights with killing, the Occitan region was shaken by a debate during the plenary assembly of its Regional Council on 14 November 2019. The “Nouveau Monde” political group proposed “*to prohibit access to bullfights for children under the age of 16, whether as part of bullfighter training or at the bullfighting public event itself*”. This proposal was rejected after a heated debate in which ecologists were accused of “totalitarian ideology” by the right-winged parties.

²⁹ CSA notice of December 18th, 2012.

³⁰https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=HRI%2fCORE%2fFR_A%2f2017&Lang=en

³¹ Translation in English of the original text : “*Le fait de provoquer un mineur à exercer, publiquement ou non, des sévices graves, ou à commettre un acte de cruauté envers un animal domestique, ou apprivoisé, ou tenu en captivité est puni de cinq ans d'emprisonnement et de 150 000 euros d'amende. Est puni des mêmes peines le fait pour toute personne physique ou morale d'organiser ou de commettre les faits visés à l'alinéa 1 en présence d'un mineur. Les dérogations prévues à l'alinéa 7 de l'article 521-1 du code pénal ne s'appliquent pas à cet article.*”; <https://www.samantha-cazebonne.com/ppl-protection-enfance>

8.3. *Judiciary actions taken to protect minors from bullfighting*

Anti-bullfighting circles have tried to take legal action on several occasions against bullfighting schools, wishing to enforce the Committee for the Rights of the Child's final observations of 2016 – to no avail.

Most recently, the Comité radicalement anti-corrída (Crac Europe), a French association for the fight against bullfighting, was denied a formal judicial Petition by the 'Conseil d'Etat', the French Supreme Administrative Court in November 2019.³² The Conseil d'Etat decided that the anti-bullfighting NGOs had not been able to demonstrate that children really suffer trauma because of bullfighting.

As already mentioned, the psychological effects of being exposed to the violence of bullfights is difficult to evaluate in children – because they suffer an evident conflict of loyalty when asked if they enjoy the practice or not. However, there is evidence that bullfighting exposes children to potential psychological trauma and development issues. Furthermore, the physical danger they are in when they practice bullfighting, notably in schools, or as spectators during bullfighting events are evident. For these reasons, the Committee for the Rights of the Child rightly observed, on several occasions and regarding bullfighting in various countries, that minors should be protected from the violence of bullfights.

Although final observations by the Committee are part of international *soft law*, they must guide the interpretation that each country makes of the Convention, which is binding. The political authorities in France should therefore have implemented the Committee's observations of 2016, which would have prevented the judiciary/administrative authorities to violate the Convention by denying the importance of protecting children from bullfighting.

9. **Violations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

By ratifying the Convention, States accept legal obligations to protect, respect and fulfil these rights for all children within its jurisdiction. The various violations by France of the Convention on the Rights of the Child have been exposed in the report provided by Fondation Franz Weber in 2014 to the Committee. This report will therefore summarise the violations of the Convention implied by bullfighting in France.

9.1. *Best interests of the Child (Article 3)*

Article 3 of the Convention states that:

“1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision”.

³² <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/politique/les-ecoles-taurines-pourront-continuer-a-enseigner-la-tauromachie-1574131238>

France has not passed the required legislation or taken the administrative measures to protect the ‘best interests’ of children or to ensure their wellbeing.

To the contrary: children may be enrolled in bullfighting schools from an extremely young age (from the age of 7 in some schools), in which their physical and psychological integrity cannot be guaranteed. Furthermore, children may freely participate in bullfights and bullfighting events, whether they are accompanied by adults or not. There is no age restriction for this. According to the French Government, it is up to each parent to decide if their behaviour ensures or not the wellbeing of their own child.

Therefore, the Convention is not correctly implemented by the State Party in relation with Article 3 of the Convention, as specified by General comments n° 5 and 14 of the Committee (CRC/GC/2003/5 and CRC/GC/2013/14). France must be reminded of its obligation under said provisions.

9.2. *Right to life (Article 6)*

According to Article 6 of the Convention, “States Parties recognise that every child has the inherent right to life” and “States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the Child”. In its General comment nr. 13 (CRC/GC/2011/13), the Committee indicated that “protection from all forms of violence must be considered not only in terms of the child’s right to “life” and “survival”, but also in terms of their right to “development”, which must be interpreted in line the overall goal of child protection. Thus, the obligation of the State Party includes comprehensive protection from violence and exploitation which would jeopardize a child’s right to life, survival and development”.

Children who attend bullfights and bullfighting events, as well as children involved in training in bullfighting schools, are at risk, as demonstrated above. Their physical safety and their development cannot be guaranteed. As such, their right to life is directly violated.

9.3. *Protection against violence (Article 19)*

Article 19 requires States to “take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child”.

France has taken no such measure to protect children from physical and psychological violence induced by their participation in bullfights and bullfighting events – be it as spectators or active participants. Bullfighting schools accept children from a young age, sometimes as young as 7, Television channels must only classify the bullfighting programmes as unsuitable under the age of 10, and there is absolutely no age restriction for children to attend bullfighting events.

9.4. *Protection of health and the right to an adequate standard of living (Articles 24 and 27)*

The French legislation allows children to be involved in bullfighting and therefore violates both Articles 24.1 and 27.1 of the Convention: the physical, mental, spiritual and moral development of the child is severely jeopardised by the danger involved in this violent activity (risk of serious and even fatal accidents, as well as habituation to violence, traumatic consequences, moral desensitisation and crisis of values).

9.5. Education (Article 29)

The right of the Child to education, as enshrined in Article 29 of the Convention and specified in General comment Nr. 1 (CRC/GC/2001/1), is also violated by the bullfighting schools, particularly during hands-on lessons involving participation in bullfights or bullfighting events. These institutions instil values in children that are contrary to the concepts of peace, empathy and respect for life and the environment that the Convention promotes. The State Party authorises and even subsidises the continuing existence of these schools. Not only does it take no measures to protect children, but it also actively participates in this type of education, which is contrary to the Convention.

9.6. Leisure, recreational and cultural activities (Article 31)

According to Article 31 of the Convention, “States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts”.

Bullfights and bullfighting events cannot be considered to be appropriate for any minor, because of the violence it implies and portrays.

9.7. Child labour and other forms of exploitation (Articles 32 and 36)

The French State tolerates and authorises the participation of minors in bullfighting performances, in public from the age of 16. These shows must be considered as forms of economic exploitation by the adults, that jeopardise the physical and moral integrity of children, even though apparently minors are not paid for these performances.

In this respect, it is important to note that the Committee, in its Final observations on the fourth and fifth periodic reports of Columbia (CRC/C/COL/CO/4-5), stated the following:

*“The Committee notes the legal and policy measures taken by the State Party to protect children from economic exploitation. However, it is concerned at the high number of children involved in child labour. In particular, it remains deeply concerned about the persistent involvement of children in dangerous and/or degrading work such as agricultural labour in illegal crops, drug dealing, illegal mining **and bullfighting**”.*

10. Violations of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations set out seventeen global goals (SDGs), which governments all over the world have accepted and which they must strive to achieve. They include objectives to reduce inequality, improve standards of living and protect lives and the planet³³. Rights of the Child are at the heart of the SDGs.³⁴

Amongst the SDGs, the 3rd, ‘Good Health’ and the 4th, ‘Quality Education’, are particularly relevant to this report:

³³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

³⁴ <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2018/05/1013862>

10.1. Goal 3 – Good Health

According to the UN website, “ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages is essential to sustainable development. Goal target 3.4 specifically refers to “promote mental health and well-being”³⁵. As already demonstrated, children involved in bullfighting – be it as a spectator or an active participant – are at risk both physically and mentally. Therefore, SDG 3 cannot be met by France if it continues to allow exposure of children to such violence and dangers.

10.2. Goal 4 – Quality Education

‘Quality Education’ not only implies an access to primary and secondary education, but also an education of *quality*. According to Goal Target 4.7, this means, in particular, ensuring that “*all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, **promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence**, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development*”.³⁶

As ‘Quality Education’ implies promoting peace and non-violence, any activity linked to a bullfighting school cannot be considered as being in line with Goal 4 of the SDGs. France cannot claim to seek to achieve the SDGs or to have achieved them if it continues to allow education to be provided by such schools.

11. Conclusion and recommendations

Involving children in bullfights and bullfighting events endangers their physical, moral and mental health and wellbeing. The State Party, who allows children to attend, watch and participate in such events, has taken no measures to comply with the Convention and the last observations published by the Committee.

As a result, Fondation Franz Weber advises that the Committee renew its recommendations to France and require that this State Party complies with its obligation under the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

More specifically, France must, as a matter of urgency, take the legislative and administrative measures that will:

- 1) Ensure that children (minors under the age of 18) do not enrol or receive lessons provided by bullfighting schools or any other institution whose purpose is to teach any type of bullfighting;
- 2) Prevent children from taking part in bullfights or bullfighting events;
- 3) Prevent children from participating as spectators in any bullfight or bullfighting event;
- 4) Prevent children from being exposed to bullfighting shows and bullfighting events reproduced on television during children’s normal viewing hours;
- 5) Make its legislation comply with the principles stated in ILO Convention n° 182 on the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

³⁵ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>

³⁶ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>