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## Press Statement

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### **Stop Live Transport: International Awareness Day**

June 14th is Stop Live Transport International Awareness Day.

SAM welcomes the Malaysian government's move in stating that regulations will soon be in place to ensure livestock and poultry like chicken, ducks, pigs and cattle will be transported safely without them being harmed.

This was a recent announcement by the Malaysian Veterinary Services Department (DVS) Director- general Datuk Dr Quaza Nizamuddin Hassan Nizam. Currently regulations are being drawn up on space requirements for animals on vehicles, number of cages permitted, proper ventilation, distance covered, feed requirements and others in the regulation of the live export industry.

In line with animal welfare groups around the world, Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) is bringing attention to the live transport of animals. Livestock are transported millions of miles by sea or by road across the world like cargo.

Lengthy voyages can be a death sentence. Sheep risk a slow death from starvation, illness, and injury after weeks on ships. Cows can emerge caked in excrement and in some parts of the world bodies of discarded dead animals can be found washed up on local beaches.

The transport of animals is one of the most stressful activities forced onto animals and there is no doubt millions suffer to varying degrees in myriad ways. Tragically the one thing worse than these journeys is what will happen to these animals at their destination—they will be horrifically killed for their meat.

A live animal is not a sack of potatoes; it breathes, it thinks, and it can suffer. But to the live animal export trade, this suffering is just a cost of doing business. Health experts are urging people to eat less meat. Additionally, the United Nations has called for a substantial worldwide diet change away from animal products in order to avoid global environmental devastation. Livestock export companies are pushing for the exact opposite while subjecting animals to extreme cruelty.

The other area of concern is the different mode of transport. The transport of animals by sea is undertaken in many areas of the world and there has been no regard for the welfare of animals transported for many years.

The unfortunate incident involving 57,000 Australian sheep stranded aboard the livestock transport ship MV Como Express for more than two weeks in 2003 after the shipment was rejected by Saudi Arabia remains fresh in everyone's mind today.

Transport by lorry is common but not much thought has been given to livestock while lorries are being loaded or unloaded which can last an hour or more, or when they are stuck in the traffic, or when the drivers have a break. Very little can be done when the lorries get stuck on the motor way with the animals exposed to the scorching heat of the sun.

In many Asian countries very little is known about the attitudes toward animal welfare from the people working within the industry. There have been no comprehensive studies of the attitudes of different industry stakeholders toward livestock welfare during transport and slaughter.

Long distance live animal transport may also facilitate the spread of animal pathogens with the potential to cause human disease. For example, the Nipah virus emerged in 1998 on an industrial pig farm in Malaysia to become one of the deadliest of human pathogens causing relapsing brain infections and killing 40% of those infected. The disease which erupted in the northern part of the Malaysian peninsula was amplified when pigs were trucked nationwide. The further the animals are transported, the further the diseases can spread.

There are risks and dangers of transporting animals over long distances. There are hundreds of more disasters that have not made headline news where animals suffer terribly and no one is held accountable; whether it be from neglect, foul weather, delays at borders or vessel breakdown, the suffering is immense.

The Guardian reported that in April 2017, almost 100 out of 1,236 cattle died on an eight-day trip from Darwin to Malaysia and Brunei; 90 were euthanised as a result of shipping. It was the first voyage of a new livestock vessel which has now had its Australian certificate revoked. The ship cannot be used for export again until it obtains a valid certificate. The mortality rate of 7.79%, exceeded the reportable level of 0.5% for voyages less than 10 days.

This calls for global awakening to the suffering of livestock during long distance journeys. It is unethical and illogical to force animals to suffer in the live export trade.

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