

Letter of support

By this letter I'd like to express my concern about the recent raids against animal welfare campaigners in Austria. To me, the peaceful struggle to end the great suffering inflicted on sentient but non-human beings in modern factory farms and other areas of animal exploitation is a struggle that deserves the deepest respect. However, I would take the same stance even if I did not agree with the cause.

The freedom to hold and express opinions is fundamental to a democracy. The possibility of forming organisations among likeminded to promote one's ideas is an inseparable part of this freedom. This is not to say that criminal acts should be accepted under the guise of a political organisation, but it is to say that the labelling of organisations as penal criminal organisations should not be misused. The mere suspicion that this is used to weaken inconvenient political forces is worrying.

In this case, I feel the authorities have gone too far. None of the alleged crimes seems to be of a dignity that motivates the use of an elite police force breaking into the homes of sleeping people and threatening them with weapons. No matter the dignity of the crime, there is no justification for remanding people in custody without specific charges or evidence to which they can defend themselves. It is deeply disturbing that a member state of the European Union so easily infringes their citizens' human rights. Unless real charges against the detainees can be presented, they must immediately be released.

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