

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

December 7, 2023

Hassan Salarieh
Administrator
Iranian Space AgencyH.E. Amir Saeid Iravani
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of IranVia e-mail: info@isa.ir; as.iravani@mfa.gov.ir

Dear Dr. Salarieh and Ambassador Iravani:

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing to you on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide—with regard to a statement made on December 6 by Iranian state media detailing how the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) reportedly sent a rocket-carrying capsule into orbit with animals onboard.¹ **Based on the information presented below, PETA urges you to permanently prohibit the use of animals in the Iranian space program, including in flights and in associated research, as many other countries with active space-exploration programs have done.**

Also on December 6, the Iranian Republic News Agency (IRNA) posted a video of the launch of Iran's "first bio-capsule into space,"² which international news media reported was carrying animals of unidentified species.³ This development follows the surfacing of shocking photos in 2013 exposing the ISA's apparent launch into space of a terrified monkey who was crudely strapped into a restraint device^{4,5}—a plan that our colleagues at PETA U.K. urged the ISA to halt in 2011.⁶

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¹Motamedi M. Iran launches animals into space as it revives bid for human missions. Al Jazeera. Published December 6, 2023. Accessed December 6, 2023.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/6/iran-restarts-sending-bio-capsules-into-space-on-way-to-human-missions>

²IRNA News Agency. #Iran successfully launches its first bio-capsule into space. X. Posted December 6, 2023. Accessed December 6, 2023.

<https://twitter.com/IrnaEnglish/status/1732313874316042419>

³AP. Iran says it launched animals into orbit in preparation for human space missions. *TIME*. Published December 6, 2023. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://time.com/6343265/iran-animal-capsule-space-orbit/>

<https://time.com/6343265/iran-animal-capsule-space-orbit/>

⁴Dehghan SK. Iran launches a monkey into space—and fires warning about its ambitions. *The Guardian*. Published January 28, 2013. Accessed December 6, 2023.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/28/iran-space-rocket-launch-monkey>

⁵PETA blasts Iran's 1960s-era space program. PETA.org. Published January 29, 2013. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://www.peta.org/blog/peta-blasts-iran-s-1960s-era-space-program/>

⁶PETA calls on Iran to scrap mission to send monkey into space. PETA.org.UK. Published June 29, 2011. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://www.peta.org.uk/media/news-releases/peta-calls-on-iran-to-scrap-mission-to-send-monkey-into-space/>

Entities

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

Iran has a long history of using rodents, turtles, worms, and monkeys in space missions.⁷ In 2011, the then-head of the ISA, Hamid Fazeli, admitted that “[f]ive monkeys are being tested in order to be able to bear the environmental effects while launching.”⁸

You’ll be interested to learn that in 2010, the very active European Space Agency (ESA)—which represents Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.K.—publicly stated that it “declines any interest in monkey research and does not consider any need or use for such results.”⁹ Instead, the ESA employs modern technology such as state-of-the-art simulators to assess health risks for astronauts—for example, the ESA uses a manikin, called Mastroshka, to assess radiation risks to astronauts.^{10,11}

Similarly, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) ended its use of primates in space radiation experiments in the early 1990s, following protests by PETA.¹² In 2010, NASA’s plans to restart the program were canceled after PETA, joined by physicians, scientists, lay people, and NASA engineers, successfully voiced strong ethical and scientific objections to the misguided plan,¹³ leading NASA to inform Brookhaven National Laboratory that “a proposal involving primate research at the NASA Space Radiation Laboratory on the Brookhaven Lab site should be removed from consideration for experimental time at the facility.”¹⁴

Other space agencies have gone further to end the use of all animals in their research. For example, in 2022, KEKA Aerospace—a private space agency in the Democratic Republic of the Congo—publicly confirmed that a rat, named Kavira, had died “because of a failure” aboard the firm’s Troposphere 5 rocket and that the company “will never use animals in [its] research again.”^{15,16}

We implore Iran not to repeat the same deadly mistakes of space programs using animals in experiments, dating as far back as the 1950s. In the interest of aligning Iran’s space program with the human-relevant science being pursued by the international community, we urge you to ban

⁷Iran to send more living creatures into space soon. Fars News Agency. Published August 1, 2012. Archived from the original on August 26, 2012. Accessed December 6, 2023.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120826011759/http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9104252337>

⁸Report: Iran attempted to launch monkey into space fails. Space.com. Published October 12, 2011. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://www.space.com/13270-iran-space-monkey-launch-failure.html>

⁹European space agency sides with monkeys. PETA.org. Published June 11, 2010. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://www.peta.org/blog/european-space-agency-sides-monkeys/>

¹⁰PETA blasts Iran’s 1960s-era space program.

¹¹PETA calls on Iran to scrap mission to send monkey into space.

¹²PETA blasts Iran’s 1960s-era space program.

¹³NASA grounds monkey radiation experiments. PETA.org. Published December 8, 2010. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://www.peta.org/blog/nasa-grounds-monkey-radiation-experiments/>

¹⁴NASA response to PETA news release. Published December 8, 2010. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://www.bnl.gov/newsroom/news.php?a=111210>

¹⁵Waldman, E. Victory! Guinea pig spared space flight after PETA steps in. PETA.org. Published August 6, 2023. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://www.peta.org/blog/troposphere-rocket-guinea-pig-space-experiment/>

¹⁶Keke Aerospace. Kavira will stay safe on earth! X. Published July 25, 2022. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://twitter.com/KekaAerospace/status/1551532293256318979>

ISA's use of animals in experiments and switch to using more effective, ethical, and economical animal-free methods.

You can contact me at ShalinG@peta.org. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shalin G. Gala". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "S" that extends to the left.

Shalin G. Gala
Vice President, International Laboratory Methods
Laboratory Investigations Department