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An overview of Iceland's capital, Reykjavík  
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## **Iceland Reassesses Its Whaling Decision**

### *The new government makes more sense*

The new government that has taken control of the country only this week seems a bit more reasonable than its predecessors, activists say, after it has announced that it will carefully revise the whaling policy extension passed on by the other rulers last week. Under the regulation, Iceland was to continue hunting the endangered fin whales for another 5 years, but with increased quotas, of more than 150 pieces. The center-right administration that resigned last week passed on the legislation among its last acts, which means that this phenomenon, of passing on ridiculous and harmful laws just before leaving office, is not solely the prerogative of people such as George W. Bush.

Despite harsh protest from environmentalists, three years ago, authorities passed legislation that pulled the country out of a 20 year-long ban on whaling, and allowed fishermen to return to the sea in 2006. The season lasted until August 2007, when it was discontinued, but whaling was resumed in May 2008. However, the new powers-that-be decided on Tuesday to bring the country back from the deep economic crisis it was in, and, among the first measures to take, was the nullification of this rule, which subjected the north Atlantic nation to a lot of international criticism.

"We agreed in a government meeting this morning to send a formal warning out to those with vested interests in whaling, saying that the recent decision of the ex-minister of fisheries about increasing the whaling quota for the next five years is now being reconsidered. We intend to make a policy statement about this issue in a few days," Finance and Fisheries Minister Steingrímur Sigfússon said during a press conference on Tuesday.

However, a poll conducted in the country has showed that 67.2 percent of citizens are in favor of a responsible cull, meaning that only a few whales are to be killed annually. Their views are shared by official proponents of whaling, who say they seek to keep the tradition alive. On the other hand, critics maintain that this so-called sport brings down Iceland's prestige level in the eyes of the world, a view that is sadly shared by just 4.1 percent of the population.

The hard-line anti-whaling group Sea Shepherd announced last week that it would take drastic action if the country decided to breach the 1986 UN Charter prohibiting whaling again, and especially if it considered to do so in increased quotas. The organization also blamed Iceland for trading whale meat with Japan, a country whose vessels Sea Shepherd has had "close" contact with over the years. Iceland's ships were also a target for the group in 1986, when the environmentalists' vessels sunk the Hvalur 6 and Hvalur 7 whaling ships.