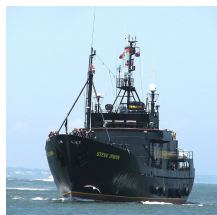


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By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



A picture of the MV Steve Irwin, Sea Shepherd's flagship
Wikipedia Commons

[Japan Says It Will Arrest Sea Shepherd Members This Year](#)

The threat was completely ignored by the organization

Japanese officials recently announced that, if the environmental group Sea Shepherd interfered with its "scientific" harvesting of whales in the Southern Ocean, activists would be arrested and detained by authorities. The threat comes after a disastrous whaling season last year, when Japan's fleet was deterred from completing its quota by both Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace vessels, which virtually chased the giant ships throughout the Ocean, until the end of the season. The hard-line environmental group announced that later this month all ships caught near the whale reservations in the Southern Ocean would be rammed and sunk. Its flagship, the MV Steve Irwin, was previously used in similar actions, when it hit the whaling factory ship, Kaiko Maru, an event that left both vessels with holes on their sides. Sea Shepard vowed to ram Japanese ships in 2009 as well, saying that their actions were illegal and that whaling was prohibited since 1982. In regard to the Japanese threats, Captain Paul Watson, the leader of the group, says "When you are willing to die for a whale, the threat of arrest is somewhat trivial. It can only further our cause of defending the whales if the Japanese take Sea Shepherd crew members hostage and haul them back to Japan for prosecution. The diplomatic, political and jurisdictional issues will be profound." "We must never forget that Japan is targeting threatened and endangered whales in an officially established whale sanctuary in violation of a global moratorium on commercial whaling and in [defiance](#) and contempt of an Australian Federal Court ruling prohibiting the killing of whales in the Australian Antarctic Territory," adds Kim McCoy, executive director of Sea Shepherd International. From a legal standpoint, the actions of the organization are justified, as the 1982 UN moratorium on endangered species asks for individuals and non-governmental organizations to uphold the law and insure that no one violates the international treaty, which Japan is clearly doing. This is not the first time the Asian nation tries to stop the organization - in 2006 it requested the UK to remove the MV Steve Irwin from the Ship Registry, which a cowardly British ruling did. The ship was later registered in the Netherlands, so it could continue its activity. Currently, the ship is at sea, carrying, among its crew members, actress [Daryl Hannah](#).