



Position Statement on Illegal Killing of Birds in Lebanon

I approve and endorse this document,

Name of NGO:

Name:

Position:

Signature:

Date:

Irresponsible and illegal killing of birds in Lebanon is thought to be one of the main factors behind the decline of many bird species in Lebanon.

Historically, people have hunted wildlife for a variety of reasons – food and sport – and in the past, such activities were conducted at a scale that was sustainable. However, this is no longer true. Bird killing in Lebanon is currently practiced illegally, regardless of season, day or night, or place, attacking all species that fly. It is a socio-economic phenomenon related to manhood and transferred through generations¹. It is undermining all conservation efforts in the country. The problem increased with the hunting ban issued in 1995 where a new group of young shooters has evolved who has no respect for species, habitats... and has no training, education or sensitization on conservation, safety or ethical issues. They shoot on anything that flies in front of them and boost their victories on social media tools. The result of that is an increasing number of injuries and mortality among both shooters² and birds, poor behavior and respect of private property as well as totally indiscriminate shooting of birds.

Illegal activities do not only affect birds' populations, but they also harm our society, existence and natural resources. Conservation, agriculture and the tourism sector all suffer from their negative impacts. Legal responsible hunters are affected by these illegal activities as well: despite the role that hunters play in ensuring the sustainability of livelihoods and habitats, they see their reputation jeopardized by illegal irresponsible killing.

Located on the second most important avian flyway in the world, Lebanon is a strategic location for migratory birds. Unfortunately, widespread problems with the illegal killing of birds exist across the country. Normalized in society, illegal shooting and trapping has become an extremely popular pastime in Lebanon. BirdLife partnership has presented during Birdfair 2015, a report based on the first ever comprehensive scientific study to quantify the scale of illegal killing across 26 countries of the Mediterranean region. The study led by BirdLife International have shown that **Lebanon ranks the 4th country in terms of the illegally killed birds per year**. The total number of illegally killed birds in the Mediterranean is 25 million birds annually. Of them, Lebanon's share is 10.5%. As a result, the mean estimated number of illegally killed birds in Lebanon is around 2,600,000 annually. The estimated mean number of individual birds killed illegally is 248 per square kilometer each year. Currently, there are 291 species of birds regularly occurring in

¹ Hunting is an activity often passed down from generation to generation – with family members teaching not only how to hunt and learn bush craft skills, but also valuable life lessons. Among other things, hunting teaches the interdependence of life, the importance of stewardship of land and wildlife, cooperation with other land users, and observation and survival skills. It is a physical activity that promotes a healthy lifestyle and demands physical fitness and discipline.

² More than 400 incidences of injury and death per year from hunting.

Lebanon with 100% of those species being illegally killed in significant numbers. The estimated mean number of individual birds killed illegally is 44 individuals for every 100 people. In fact, an estimated 400 people die each year due to their lack of expertise. New methods for mass killing of birds are being used in the country, such as song playback devices, mist-nets and bright lights at night to attract birds into traps.

The impact of illegal killing of Birds is:

- Decline of bird species; both in population and diversity.
- Decline in numbers of endangered species; thus contributing to species extinction.
- Promotes killing using unethical means. It is not a fair chase, most of the times.
- leads to violence and accidents against humans.
- It isn't about conservation or population control. It kills the largest and biggest animals while in nature predators kill the weakest and sick animals.

Our Position is to promote responsible hunting through:

- a) Research and monitoring
 - Develop and adapt monitoring protocol for IKBs.
 - Monitor indicator species in blackspots.
 - Establish national database for indicator species as a tool for decision making.

- b) Policy and law enforcement
 - Advocate for policy change
 - Advocate for strengthening law enforcement
 - Advocate for increasing the prices of bullets

- c) Education
 - Working on introducing this issue in school curriculums
 - Extracurricular activities for the young generations about birds, wildlife and hunting
 - Workshops in schools
 - Summer camps related to nature and hunting
 - School visits to important ecological areas.

- d) Awareness campaigns
 - Work with hunters to educate shooters
 - Work with the municipalities of blackspots
 - Develop and implement national awareness campaigns for the public.

- e) Capacity building
 - Raise capacity of concerned government officials.
 - Raise capacity of law enforcement officers.
 - Raise capacity of local authorities.

- f) Establish responsible hunting areas in collaboration with municipalities
- Set monitoring scheme at RHAs, to ensure prey species' sustainability
 - Set a series of precautionary measures
 - Guarantee the proper management and the enforcement of the hunting law
 - Allow the hunting of preys within the legal limit under local community's supervision, represented by the local authority (the municipality)
 - Confirm balance between the needs of wildlife and people's needs

SPNL has found an ideal solution to implement the hunting law, which is in limiting hunting within specified public areas in several Lebanese regions, owned by the municipalities. The areas must be clearly defined and surrounded by guards, in order to ensure secure and controlled entry for hunters, and to ensure their departure with the allowed numbers of hunted preys, as provided by law, in a way that allows the punishment of the violators. The establishment of customized Responsible Hunting zones in Lebanon is an attempt to achieve a balance between the needs of wildlife and people, using the best available knowledge, in order to guarantee safe hunting.