



Joint Press Release on the reoccurring incidents of Great White Shark landings in Tunisia

Tunisia 25th of November 2020

Two unfortunate incidents took place recently in Tunisia, where 2 individuals of Great White Sharks (*Carcharodon carcharias*) were landed and sold in the local markets. The sharks were captured as bycatch. This follows other such incidents reported in [2018](#), [2015](#), [2013](#), [2012](#) and [2009](#). Landings of White Sharks contravene the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) measure protecting this species and all other shark and ray species listed on Annex II of the Barcelona Convention Protocol concerning the Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean.

The Great White Shark, *Carcharodon carcharias* (Linnaeus, 1758) is one of the most iconic animals of our oceans and the world's largest known predatory fish. Unfortunately, contemporary narratives widely presented in popular and mainstream and cultural media, have attached an utterly negative connotation to this fascinating species, propagating a fabricated image of them as implacable and voracious predators.

Currently, its Mediterranean population is listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species due to the dramatic decline of its population in the last 50 years that varies from 52% to up to 96% in some regions.

While there are no targeted fisheries for the species in the Mediterranean, bycatch in different fishing gears, like the pelagic longlines, bottom trawls and purse seines is the most prevalent threat for its collapsing population. Although it is possible that these animals were caught accidentally, it is intended that fishers release them alive.

It is particularly important that competent authorities pay close attention to such incidents, taking into account the existing protection and conservation status of the species, and the fact that such accidental captures could allow the development of an illegal market. This could threaten the survival of the Great White Shark, a species that exhibits low reproductive and growth rates, long lifespan and a highly migratory nature.

We call upon the Tunisian authority to adopt a domestic protection measure for the Great White Shark and all species included in the GFCM/42/2018/2¹ list, and to further enforce the implementation of all existing binding measures that are yet to be effectively enforced and could contribute significantly to the conservation of these threatened species. In addition, we urge all Mediterranean countries to co-operate to apply and to enforce all relevant decisions and legislations. In parallel, it is important to educate and inform fishers, involved stakeholders,

¹ GFCM/42/2018/2 is the amended GFCM/36/2012/3

and the general public on the value and status of such iconic and unique marine animals, that serve as flagship species for the conservation of the Mediterranean basin.

Applied legislations for the protection of the Great White Sharks in the Mediterranean

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), inclusion in Appendix II (Species threatened with extinction)

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), such as the inclusion as a "protected species" in Appendix II (Migratory species conserved through Agreements)

EU: Council Regulation (EU) 2019/1241, in Annex I (prohibition to fish for, retain on board, tranship, land, store, sell, display or offer for sale, as referred to in Article 10(2)) in all waters

EU: Regulation (EU) 2015/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council – transposition of GFCM/42/2018/2 into EU Regulations applicable to the EU Fleet in the Mediterranean.

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION (EU) 2016/1251 in Table 1D (Species to be monitored under protection programmes in the Union or under international obligations)

Law on Fisheries n.64/2012 - amended on april April 2020 by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Albania

Israel: protected since 2005

Italy: 1992, law on wildlife protection n.150/1992.

Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 26/15

Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 76/06

Spain: Real Decreto 139/2011 Listado de Especies Silvestres en Régimen de Protección Especial y del Catálogo Español de Especies Amenazadas

Slovenia: Decree on the protected free-ranging animal species (UL RS 46/04)

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