

## PRESS RELEASE

# “Banana blockade” on the Czech-Austrian border



On Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2010 at 1pm, Czech human rights activists will block the border crossing in Mikulov-Drasenhofen for 15 minutes. Dressed in banana costumes, holding an Austrian banana flag, dancing and singing an Austrian mutation of the famous Banana Boat Song, and giving out free bananas with “Produce of Austria” stickers, the activists will draw attention to the ongoing trial with 13 animal protection activists, which truly resembles a trial in a banana republic.

“This trial is a mockery of the most basic principles of the rule of law. The activists face prison because someone unknown somewhere did something. Like under the Inquisition, the activists’ thoughts and beliefs are thoroughly examined by the judge to find out whether they are criminal; the activists are denied access to the police investigation files; seats for the public in the court room are blocked by police students driven by a special bus every day,” said Marek Vorsilka, the international co-ordinator of the Shame on Austria campaign.

“It is astounding how confident the Austrian state seems to be about doing whatever they want without taking care about what the law and the constitution allows. The recent verdict ruling that the activists must have access to the investigation files – completely ignored by the police – is a good example.”

### Reform of the law

The protest also supports the aims of law experts and organisations to reform Section 278a of the Austrian criminal code, which forms the basis of the animal protection trial in the current state.

“Austria must decide whether they want to choose the path of a developed constitutional state, or rather the path of a banana republic. Our action is a sort of warning against where Austria could end up if they don’t pull the emergency brake and reform the law that has produced this,” says Marek Vorsilka.

### International campaign

The action is part of a campaign called Shame on Austria (web: [www.shameonaustria.org](http://www.shameonaustria.org)), which aims to raise awareness of the case internationally. The campaign has a website with information about the case in 23 languages. Numerous protest actions have also been organised as part of the campaign, including an interruption of a Davis Cup match in Israel or covering the signs on the Austrian border with a sticker that had the word Rechtsstaat crossed out<sup>1</sup>.

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### Notes

- The blockade will take place on road E461, 0-50 metres away from the frontiers on the Czech side. In case of an interview request, I recommend a meeting at the car park located right after the border crossing (between the two former passport control buildings) on the left side (coming from Austria) at between 12.15 and 12.45.

### Links

1. Shame on Austria: [Interruption of a Davis Cup match](#) & [International action on the Austrian border](#)