



INTERVIEW



Constantine Aporu UGANDA

Founder of Eco Space Foundation and activist

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In the first half of 2025, in this In-Depth Perspectives section, we interviewed [three anti-speciesist female activists from Latin America](#). In this second half of the year, we continue our exploration of animal activism and justice in other parts of the world. Around the globe, there are people passionately working to defend animal rights, and this time we talk with Constantine Aporu of Uganda (page 2), Nilgün Engin of Türkiye (page 17), Lars Corvinus Olesen of Denmark (page

25), and Serge Magashu of the Democratic Republic of Congo (page 37). These activists come from diverse backgrounds but share anti-speciesist values, and in most cases, they challenge their own cultures and traditions of violence against animals. Despite their different social contexts, these individuals demonstrate that the transformation of all human societies has begun, paving the way for human existence that respects non-human animal life.

For those unfamiliar with your background, Who is Constantine Aporu? What motivated him to get involved in activism for the benefit of animals?

My name is Constantine Aporu. I'm from Kampala, Uganda. I am the founder of [Eco Space Foundation](#), African based organization in Uganda that started in 2023.

And we do very good activities in schools, on streets, in communities to encourage people to live an ethical life. I've got a degree of Arts, Bachelor of Arts in Future Sciences from McKenna University and at university I was a student's leader. I was guild academic affairs minister and guild representative councilor.

What inspired me to become a vegan? It started with our family. I was born in eastern Uganda and predominantly in our communities, our grandparents used to keep animals, rare animals, or farm animals. Before I was born, we had insecurities in our community. And our home was attacked, cows were stolen, and my grandfather was killed, and my parents had to relocate from eastern Uganda to Kampala, where I was later born. So initially throughout the years we never used to go back to our home.

And I used to ask my parents why they never liked where they were from. Then they told me the whole story. Now this happened before I was born. This is something I was told over the years as we grew up. And then I started just hating the whole thing to do with animal abuse and more cruelty and more exploitation.

But I didn't know anything to do with veganism or even animal rights. So, throughout my high school and university life, I always really had compassion for animals. But I wasn't vegan because I didn't know anything to do with veganism until 2019 when I met a friend online. She was a volunteer from Anonymous for the Voiceless, and then I shared my story with her. She told me about veganism. She shared videos with me. And then I got to learn about animal rights. I got to learn about veganism. That is how my journey started of being a vegan activist.

From 2019 I started volunteering with Anonymous, Uganda Kampala Chapter, and then I joined another organization. Throughout 2019 up to date I have been very active in the vegan movement and right now I still organize for Anonymous. I organize for with a Free Uganda Chapter. I also organize for our planet. There's two at the National Memorial Day that happens every year on

1st June. That is what I'm doing right now besides the Eco Space. I think that is so much about me.

You're involved with many organizations now?

Yes, I am involved with these organizations because it gives me a chance to really give in my time and energy to do something with animals, but I also get a chance to connect with the vegan community, to learn from them, see how they're doing, the vegan work. It gives me a chance, really to have my capacity build and strengthened because in Uganda, or I could say in Africa, it is very hard to have a collaboration with a very big organization, let's say maybe in Europe or US. But through the Chapters we get a chance to collaborate, attend our webinars, attend our workshops, get the training, and see how things are running. And you know, sometimes maybe you could be having challenges and then you have someone to talk to within different community.

What are the main projects and achievements that you have collaborated on through your career as an activist?

I'll start with Eco Space. In the last three years, next year on the week of October 3rd, I would be able to educate over 30 000 students from five schools. In three years, but we have very good achievement for us. We have a program able to reach each over 15 000 by 20 years. There is also one done by 40 years. At the day, it is something to us. With Aerospace Foundation, we started in October 2023 and last week we made two years and in our two years Aerospace Foundation we have been able to reach 45 schools and we have educated all of our students about animal rights, equality and vacancy and we also have a vacancy program that we conduct in schools and communities that we've been able to receive with 15 000 plant vesting rules to encourage young people to practice plant-based diet. We've also been able to institute and plant over 5000 and 203 is still in schools and communities with a goal increased access to plant best options, but also to conserve the environment and still in two years, we've been able to hold over 30 community and treated outfitters. When we go to see something, we've been able to hold over 30 outfitters.

So, I'll also talk about our Planet Bears Group, and we've been able to hold and host two annual National Annual Rise Day for last year in April and then this year in June, but we've attended by over 100 people. Now this is not easy to be done in Uganda or I could say in Africa, but we want to have a lot of challenges with funding and then we have very few vegans and people are very negative about vegans and all the family rights. It's very hard to have numbers

coming outside of people in respect of communities because of passion and support of the volunteers and then for anonym pass. And all these other chapters will be able to go to regular outreaches, at least two to three outreaches every month. And of course, throughout the years at least we always have activities coming in every week, every month.

With these two or three activities per month, do you receive any kind of recognition? Or even with the Eco Space Foundation, do you receive any recognition from the government, for example?

Recognition is quite challenging, but mostly when we have a collaboration, most of the recognition that we get is maybe a collaboration on Instagram, maybe on Facebook, maybe they get to tag us, maybe they'll mention us. Yes, which we really appreciate because it gives us visibility. The other global organization that we have collaborated with recently is Thrive Philanthropy. They always have a campaign in schools, a vegan school lunch campaign which we collaborated with, and they have always mentioned our participation on their shows, and they were also collaborated with the [Plant-Based Treaty](#). I'm sure you know about the Plant-Based Treaty, and they've always mentioned our work and collaborated on social media.

You already told us about your beginning to be a vegan in 2019 and how the Anonymous for the Voiceless outreach impact you to become a vegan. Maybe you can tell us more about how did you adopt the vegan diet? How were your process and your transition process to get into it and what are the key factors that made you take this decision?

About my diet, initially I wasn't really a big meat eater as such because I still had health challenges. Whenever I consumed animal products, I would have inflammations, but still, eventually, because of that story that really happened, it united my compassion. I felt like I didn't have to eat animals. I didn't have to kill an animal to survive because in Uganda, we have a lot of plant-based options. We have a lot of organic foods. We have good climate. We grow our own food. There's a lot of food to eat and I feel like I didn't have to continue eating animals, not just because of health reasons, but because I thought I didn't have to kill an animal to survive. Really, I feel like I had to respect these animals and live side by side.

How difficult was it for you to make the transition with your family, for example, or your social circle around or in your daily life? How was the process of you to making this transformation?

To start with, being a vegan in Uganda or in Africa is quite challenging because of that peer influence, people around us, they feel like it's a European thing or it is a Western thing, and they feel like we are trying to get into something that is not within our cultures. And even at the beginning, I didn't feel like posting about my veganism on social media because most of my friends would comment negatively. My family was not on my side, but I felt like it was the right thing to do, and I had to do it anyway. And I started posting a little bit. Then at a certain point of time I started doing some live sessions on Instagram and Facebook and then the vegan community supported me and then I got to connect with different vegan chapters, and I relied so much on the vegan community. Really the vegan community supported me so much. I would always attend the workshops and then get to learn how to counter the challenges, how to talk to people, how to handle a maid, how to handle social pressure. It was really very challenging because at home they would still prepare animal products and literally have nothing to eat. And maybe sometimes you're starving, sometimes you have to look for a way to survive but had to look for a way to really. If through it, because I believed respecting animals or compassion would be the right thing to do.

But from the very beginning, it's not like a normal thing to see in your country. It's not like very usual to find vegan people.

That is true. Because literally, everything that happens around us, from religion, from the culture, from the norms, we are raised as people who really look at animals as commodities because people treat animals as either food or commodities. That is how society has brought our people in Uganda, but maybe it was different from my side because my grandfather was an animal farmer and we had insecurities in our community and people used to do animal raids. They would attack different homes and steal animals, destroy property, and even kill some people.

So, when our home was attacked, we lost our grandfather. That was before I was born. But my parents told me about it later in the years, and my parents had to relocate far away, almost 400 kilometers from my home to Kampala. And we grew up far away from home. My parents hated going home because they had a very bad history with our community. Now I think for me really maybe I have a very strong attachment, but really a few people are trying to come up, a few people are trying to come up and you know, I know a few vegans in Africa, but really, they're very few. It is still quite challenging. But I think what is important for most of the people is to get that exposure, to learn, to listen to their stories, to watch their videos. Because if I hadn't met a friend

online, I couldn't have learned about veganism. Honestly, I didn't know anything to do with veganism or even animal rights, really.

That's why social media is very important. You get to meet people that maybe can inspire you, even teach you one thing or the other.

I'm curious about your job with Eco Space because I have seen you go to schools, and you make an education job with the kids. So, am I correct?

Yes, you're correct.

What is the perception of the kids about veganism or about the ideas that you're trying to show them?

We always received mixed reactions. I like vegan education because for a very long time, I was very ignorant. I didn't know anything to do with vegans or even animal rights and it's kept me at the dark even when we had a history of losing our grandfather because of animal commodification. When I started activism, I felt like a lot of young people and even adults in Uganda didn't know about veganism or even animal rights. That's why when I started Eco Space Foundation in 2023, I felt like together with that team, I felt like we had to create awareness. And we started reaching out to schools. Of course, some schools are negative. Sometimes when you write to them, they will never give you feedback. Sometimes they give you an appointment and as you're talking to the students, they can interrupt or cut short the sessions. Sometimes when you talk to students about veganism, they don't give you attention. Sometimes they just walk away. Some of them walk away. Sometimes some of them, they just keep talking within the session. Sometimes they don't really give you attention. Sometimes others get to listen. But what is important on our side is each time we get a chance to talk to young people is when we get to show them the compassionate part of the animals. We show them the scented part of animals. We try to share local stories and they get to learn something. Some of them get asked questions, some of them really give us attention. And now we are starting to form vegan clubs in Ugandan schools. Why? Because we feel like we have to keep engaging the young people in vegan activities so that they can learn and maybe they could turn vegan and even maybe we could have sustainability, different actions organized by students. So yes, it is quite challenging, but we are really trying.

Some society groups and academic experts have proposed that the Ministers of Education and higher institutions incorporate the topics of animal rights

and animal welfare into their study contents. Why should this be done and how could it be effective, effectively integrated into formal education? In your opinion, do you have any example in your country about this?

To start with, when we talk about a curriculum, it is something that is really very important because what we learn from school, it impacts and affects our future, what will happen in the future, because literally most of our young people, whatever they learn throughout school, that is what they do maybe 5 or even 10 years to come. And I believe integrating the curriculum, integrating vegans, more even ethics or animal rights within the curriculum is very important. Why? Because this young people have to learn about the animal rights. They have to learn about the ethics. They have to learn about vegans. They have to learn about how you know the food chain, how factory farming affects the environment, how factory farming depletes the land, the water, how it leads to pollution. When young people get to learn about these issues from a young age, through the curriculum, through the schools, it can really improve on how they think, how they treat animals, how they conserve the environment and even how they live peacefully within planet Earth. So, I feel like it's really very important to have the ethics integrated in the curriculum. It's really very important. It's one thing that we're trying to push for, though it is still quite challenging because people who are forming these policies at the top or the highest abuses of animals that the top people in government play on the factory farms, they control the arms of government.

Young people that can't think openly about conservation, about animal rights, about the food chain, because we are thinking of having food insecurities maybe by 2050, specialized oceans, people polluting the environment, people are doing all these atrocities because they are ignorant.

So, when we have all these issues embedded in the curriculum, then we shall have responsible people who are passionate and compassionate about a sustainable future. So maybe a few examples of how we are trying to make progress in Uganda. I want to say that we have one of the very first vegan schools in Africa, it is here in Uganda. It is called [Atlas Vegan School](#), and I know the founder of the school and we have always collaborated with them. He started this school. It is in a place called Michiana. It's a vegan school that teaches young people about empathy, compassion and now they also have vegan feeding programs.

And this is one of the very first steps we are taking in Uganda to embed veganism or even ethics within the education. It is a primary school, but they're

making significant progress. And there are also other organizations, organizations that are coming up to teach about veganism in Uganda, though there are still few, but they're really coming up. And we also have a vegan society, Kenya, Tanzania, most of that East African countries are really trying to teach about veganism in schools, but then policy wise or curriculum wise, we have not really yet met a big progress, but we hope maybe over time we shall be able to make a strong impact.

So, this Atlas Vegan School is like regular school for the kids, but beside all the academics, they receive a vegan education?

Yes. And they also hold vegan activities within the school, like debates, the talks, they get to plant trees, they get to try out plant based foods and they also participate in a lot of vegan activities like vegan school lunch campaigns. We have worked with them before in different campaigns like the Vegan School Lunch Campaign and then the Veg Fest and I believe we shall also still collaborate with them. I think in December they will be organizing a three-day festival. So, they have to add two platforms. They have a school and a vegan organization love for all, so that is how they're trying to do it. We are trying to make small steps. It's not easy, but we hope over time the end goal is to engage associations, engage policy makers, people in government to recognize and really include ethics or veganism per se. In that curriculum, we hope over time we shall get the yes.

That sounds very good. At the constitutional level, what is the current legal situation in Uganda regarding animal rights and welfare?

When we talk about our constitution, most of us, of course we have, we have laws, but most of them are, I could say obsolete. Most of them are outdated. Most of them are outdated and a few are leaning on the welfare part. But they're not recognizing animal rights. I'll give an example of Uganda. When you look at our constitution, it does not mention, it does not talk about rights. And even some of the farm animals or even some of the wild animals are not mentioned within the constitution. So, the constitution is selective, it is outdated, and a little bit highlights warfare and we have a very big challenge of implementation of that law in such a way that these laws, they are not put in place because there is a lot of animal abuse, animal exploitation even when it is televised. It is not prosecuted. I'll give an example of the wildlife, the Wildlife Act. The Wildlife Act suggests that when someone is arrested poaching or inflicting on wildlife, they should be arrested, prosecuted. Or they should pay a fine of \$5000. But it has never happened in Uganda. No one has been

arrested. No one has ever paid. No one has ever paid that fine. It is only written in the constitution, but it is not really implemented because animals are treated as objects. And the people that are abusing animals mostly, they are top in government. They control everything. The arms of government, they have power. You cannot do anything to them. And they also own the biggest farms in the country and the biggest processing farms, the dairy factories. So, it is really very hard to come up with stringent or even strict laws against the perpetrators of animal abuse or exploitation. But we are trying.

What happened with pets, dogs, and cats, for example, in regarding the law?

Now it is like we have a very big challenge. They're not mentioned or even acknowledged. Companion animals are not mentioned or even acknowledged. Even pigs, turkeys, they're not mentioned or even acknowledged. They're not. Why? Because I think they don't see a point in, having a constitution that respects the rights of animals. Why? Because these are people who abuse these animals as well. These are people who own square miles of factory farms. These are people that own the factories, the dairy factories, the milk factories. So, to them it is business and the moment you start raising suggestions for reforms, animal rights reforms, vegan reforms, it means you're attacking their business, and they cannot allow you because at some point when we are doing vegan or animal rights activism, we are interrupted by police. Sometimes you seek for a clearance to hold, let's say a vegan match or an animal rights match, and police cannot give you clearance because you're jeopardizing business for the top, the big people. For them they think animal agriculture is a business. And more commodification it is, it is a business for them. So, it is really very, very hard. But then, there are a few organizations that are coming up. I've heard about some in South Africa that are working on legal reforms. We hope we shall also get there over time. But before we get there, I think the most important thing that we have to really focus on is education, vegan education, creating awareness. Because however much we try to push for policies, constitutional reforms, we cannot get there when this point agreeing or even let's say ignorant about the issues we are discussing. I believe vegan education is very important or awareness say that right from schools, communities and maybe corporate outreach is creating awareness saying that the policy makers, the population is a way of that direct issues that are happening.

I believe if we do more of that kind of work, we shall have public support. For example, in Uganda, when you want to come up with a law to go through the executive, the ministerial body and then to get to parliament, the members of parliament get to vote and debate, and then when they agree and then

eventually, they proceed through the speaker and then to the president. So, to have all the support from the legislators and policymakers, it is very important to create mass awareness.

If we keep pushing that message and spreading more messages out, veganism, animal rights, then people will appreciate and even support us in those legal reforms. And I think this can happen elsewhere in the world, not just Africa. Creating more awareness, exposing animal abuse, exposing cruelty, exposing the healthy crisis attributed to animal abuse, exposing the environment or climate crisis attributed to animal agriculture. I believe as we create more awareness, the population will appreciate it, and we shall have legal reforms or even policy reforms.

The speciesism is present in all countries and manifest in various ways, such as raising animals for human consumption, bull fighting, animal fights, among others. What can be done by civil society, universities, and governments to reduce or eliminate these practices that are often associated to the culture?

Culture is one thing that is deeply rooted in us because we are always in these communities. We are raised in business cultures. We are trained to respect our cultures and we also have our own traditions. In Uganda we have kingdoms. And each kingdom has its own cultural practices and norms, and the people believe that they have to follow those norms to be patriotic and to be obedient to their own norms. So, it is really a very big thing to transform cultures and ensure that people are open minded, but still it goes back to what I said earlier. Education and awareness. Showing people that animals suffer. Animals are sentient beings. Animals deserve to be respected. Animals deserve freedom. Showing them a better way to live. Showing them that whatever we did to respect our cultures, animals also have a life, and they deserve to be respected. I believe the most important thing still when it comes to that is awareness, spreading that message, creating awareness because take that example of Uganda, some animals are treated, they think some animals are more important than others. Someone will be driving on the streets, and they'll feel comfortable to knock a dog, I could say, or a cat to run off a dog or a cat, but they will feel like maybe they will have to respect a chicken because they get eggs from a chicken. Maybe they'll have to respect a cow because they get milk from a cow. And they feel like maybe just as you walk around, it's normal to throw a stone to another animal. They feel like it is normal. I still believe that creating awareness and educating people will help us to draw a line to make sure that people understand that the principle of sentience, that all beings are

equal, and all beings deserve to be respected. I believe that that will be one of the very first steps to end speciesism, if people learn to draw a line, a sentence line, people learn to respect all lives, people learn that a chicken deserves to live, just like a dog, just like a cat, just like an elephant. Because we have a lot of national parks in Uganda and there is a lot of poaching. And most people feel like wild animals are worthless. They feel like wild animals are worthless. They belong to the wilderness. They don't have to be respected. Some people go ahead and encroach on the national reserves because they feel like national animals are not important.

Most people believe that farm animals are important because they get to sell these animals and make money. They get to eat these animals, they get to use their products, and some of them even use these animals for different rituals. Because in Uganda, for example, if someone dies, they will kill an animal to find out the dead. When people are getting to marry, they will have to give in to pay a lot of animals, giving a lot of animals in the form of jewelry. People look at animals in a way that benefits them, which is a selfish move. I feel like one of the very first steps to end species is still education, creating awareness, teaching people about sentience. When people don't appreciate that all lives matter, then eventually animal abuse will reduce animal exploitation will reduce commodification, and I believe most people will really get to turn vegan.

In American countries it's normal that livestock companies receive subsidies from governments so they can stay working and people can pay less for the product. At the end they receive meat, eggs, milk. Are you aware if that happens also in your country?

When we talk about subsidies in Uganda, the people that own this big factory farms and even animal processing companies that are big people in government, they get to give themselves the tax exemptions and all that benefits because for them it is business. It is very hard for you to come up and maybe you're pointing fingers or writing an animal, an article on a national newspaper and maybe you're pointing, fingers or you're raising insights on a factory farm that is owned by someone big in government because our president owns square miles of factory farms, very huge chunks of land. He's traditionally an animal farmer president. His family, the big point government and they get to give themselves these benefits, the tax holidays and exemption that you have nothing to say to them. So yes, it is also happening here.

What has been the evolution of anti-speciesism activism in Uganda and Africa? What are the main challenges in this region regarding animal rights? And how much progress has been made and what areas do you think still require greater visibility and further work?

That's the art spaces movement has. I could say it is not very strong in Africa because I've not heard about a lot of vibrant organizations in Africa. I talk about maybe West Africa, maybe South Africa, talk about maybe even East Africa, most of the East African countries, it is not really a very strong movement because veganism is a growing movement in Africa. We have a few vegans to start with, a few vegan organizations as well. The movement is not very vibrant in Africa, I'll say that, but that movement is picking up, that movement is picking up and we also are receiving capacity building from big conferences like our summit. I think you know our summit annual and vegan summit. We had the very first summit in Africa in July. It happened in Kenya, and we had a lot of African people attending rubbing shoulders with the rest of the vegan community trying to learn. But still, what I could say is that that movement is very young in Africa, and one of the other reasons that slide the movement is not very vibrant is because of limited funding. Most of the organizations in Africa don't get to gain the visit bills or even do remarkable work because they have limited funds.

Most of the organizations in Africa rely on support of volunteers and overtime it becomes very hard to sustain the work. That's why our movement is still very low and most of the organizations are now shifting from veganism to welfare because I believe there is a lot of money in welfare. It is happening right now. I know a lot of organizations that have already made a shift because they feel like there is no funding in animal rights or ethics or even veganism. The movement, I will be very open with you, it is less vibrant. It is very less vibrant, and we also have limited capacity building. We have a few vegan leaders to push and have the message out there. But we hope maybe over time we shall get to grow. We shall get to grow and make remarkable impact, but really, I'll still emphasize movement is still small. We still have a very long way to go.

And from a vegan point of view, what is your opinion about the animal welfare movement?

I respect that movement as well, but from a vegan opinion, you cannot love an animal and eat an animal at the same time. It is a conflict; it is a contradiction. On my end, it is a contradiction. I believe animals are sentient things and the only thing that we have to do with animals is to really respect them and in

totality and without abusing them in any way whatsoever. That is how I look at it. Because when we switch, when we switch lens to welfare and all that, we are contradicting ourselves and we're not making progress in the vegan movement because at the end of it all, we are encouraging people to eat animals. But in a way that reduces suffering, all the same cruelty, you cannot. We cannot create a vegan world when we are really contradicting ourselves. But I respect people who are doing that. I really respect them. But I believe the right thing to do is to just focus on ending abuse and more cruelty in totality.

Can you share a case as an example where a speciesism practice has been eliminated or reduced in your country or any other part of the world?

Still not so much in Uganda. Not so much, but earlier in the days we used to have people lock up the chimpanzees in Uganda for entertainment. They would use them for entertainment for tourists, especially in the zoos, they'll tease them, they'll do all those sorts of things really. But then the Uganda Wildlife Association came up and they came, they drafted a law that stopped that. So that is that one of the most important things that I've witnessed in Uganda. So now most of these chimpanzees are always rescued and taken to sanctuaries and they're given a safe haven. It is no longer happening, though we still have zoos, but really people love to go to the national parks. We also tell people that if you want to see animals, go to the national parks, go to the animal reserves where animals live freely, not in cages. About the chimpanzees, we have made a significant progress as a country, but really when it comes to farm animals, we still have a very long way to go because every single day animal farm companies are coming up, every single day. And there are a lot of investors coming up in Uganda. Why? Because we have that good soil to grow this food that is fed to animals, and we also have a lot of vast land and even our government favors animal agriculture. There are a lot of investors coming up and as a move vegan movement we just have to triple our effort, create more visibility, educate more people, engage into policy reforms, engage into constitutional reforms, which all requires a lot of hard work, but we shall get there.

A diet that includes animal products (meat, dairy, eggs, honey) is normalized around the world, and global consumption continues to rise. According to [FAO](#) projections, by 2050 global meat consumption may increase up to 73 % compared to early-2000s levels, driven primarily by population growth and rising incomes in developing countries. More recent data indicates that the combined production and consumption of meat, dairy, and eggs is set to increase by 17 % by 2034, with agricultural and fish production rising 14 %

globally over the same period. Caloric intake from animal-source foods is expected to climb 6 % worldwide, and as much as 24 % in lower-middle-income countries (OECD/FAO). In contrast, there is extensive documentation of the negative impact on the environment, animal welfare, and public health caused by industries based on animal products. What is your perspective on this situation? What actions can be taken to shift this trend?

This is really very challenging because we cannot stop the population from growing and we cannot stop urbanization or even globalization, because that is the trend and to keep coming up and coming up and coming up. And there's a lot of propaganda, of course, most of these farm companies or abusers of animals. They control the media and there is a lot of propaganda, and I believe that is one of the reasons as to why people continue to eat this animal products. Some of these companies even go ahead to manufacture products and brand them vegan when they use animal ingredients. But because of the persuasive adverts and the propaganda media, people continue to consume these animals. Some of them go ahead and publish biased research or data that encourages people to consume animal products, not plant-based products, and some of them go ahead to engineer the meat against veganism. Most of these big farm animal companies, they go ahead, and engineer meat and they spread lies. And so, we will have a very long way to go to the bank, most of this meat. But I believe one of the ways that we really have to focus on to address this challenge of the growing population that increased consumption of animal products is really teaching people the facts, sharing the data, showing people how consuming animal products is deteriorating our health, sharing the number, showing them how people are getting cancer, strokes, diabetes, obesity, how we are losing a lot of people because of the consumption of animal products and I believe when we share that empirical data and statistics, maybe it could change how people think. Maybe the other thing we have to show is to share evidence about how animal agriculture is greatly destroying the planet issue, talking about the pollution, talking about the climate crisis, showing them what is really happening because we have practical examples, we have countries where people go ahead and destroy the wetlands to cut down that freeze to raise animals. So maybe we can as well share this kind of examples and maybe you could change what people think. Maybe they could be like we have to really switch from animal products to a plant-based diet that is ethical but also eco-friendly, and then maybe water, of course, most of the water is used in the process of animal agriculture and some countries already have the water crisis and there is also a lot of pollution, and it is believed that in the coming years we shall have fishless oceans.

And all these points us to one direction for the security, climate crisis, health crisis. The same applies still to the environment. Still, we cannot continue with this ineffective form of animal agriculture and maybe industry or movement. Why? Because it is very expensive. Talk about the excess water, talk about the excess land, talk about the pollution, talk about too much food that is required to feed the animals. I think we just need to share these facts with people and maybe they will appreciate that we have to shift from animal products to a vegan movement of plant-based products, because we shall have food insecurity in the future when we destroy the planet because of animal agriculture and all these ill practices. The thing is we shall not have food.

And animal products are expensive in countries like Uganda because some families it is a privilege to eat some of these other animal products. It is a privilege and yet plant based products are cheap and accessible but also healthy. So, imagine we just continue with that trend of buying expensive animal products, it is not sustainable and there is inequality. There is no equity at all. Some people will miss out. The only guarantee that we can have for sustainability is by embracing sustainable practices like regenerative agriculture. Mulching, afforestation, planting more fruit trees, conserving the environment, planting organic food that will guarantee sustainable, healthy living, sustainable, equitable access of resources, food per se. So just to summarize it, I just believe that whereas the population is growing, it is very important to share the real evidence, the real data and statistics on how animal agriculture, even consuming animal products, is destroying our lives, the planet and even the animals. I just feel like we just have to keep opening up people's eyes to do more research, to expose more animal suffering. There are people maybe in the film industry, maybe they can go ahead and film most of these atrocities. Researchers, maybe the academia can proceed and research and publish this data and maybe if they can help get us like us, we can go ahead and keep teaching people, showing people that dangers that are going to face asthma in 10 or 20 years. I believe we just have to share that evidence and proven data with people. Maybe it could change the way they really think. Maybe it could change their patterns of living overtime, yes.

What is the situation of access to water in your country?

We have access to water, but the challenge of water in Uganda is now under our corporation, national water and sewerage corporation, and it is owned by the government. But water is expensive. We have a lot of lakes in Uganda. We get this water locally. But it is very expensive. Some communities like in eastern Uganda, northern Uganda, people had to access water. They have to walk for

long distances to access water, maybe from a running lake or river, maybe from a well, a spring. Women have to walk for long distances. Some public communities like government schools don't have even a water source. So yeah, water is still a challenge, but hopefully we shall get there over time and have better access to water.

Lastly, if you would like to add a closing message to end this interview.

It has been an amazing interview and I am happy that I've shared my insights. But still, like I said earlier, as we look at making incredible impact, but also turning more people over again and spreading our message wider, I believe we just have to focus on creating more awareness, educating as many people as we can, because there are a lot of people out there that don't get to see or even hear this message. But then to all activists out there, the most important thing is to always show up and do whatever you can. Every small action brings us closer to a kinder world. And of course, the other thing is we just need more support, more capacity building, more trainings and connecting all around with the African community, because we cannot do it alone. You could be having an initiative that is very impactful, maybe in your country and maybe if you shared with me, maybe I could also emulate it and have it in my country. And of course, we also need more visibility and support, all around support to do this work really. Give an example of Eco Space, we work with volunteers. For the last two years, volunteers have supported our work, but we have less funding coming to our site. Then when we try to fund race, it's very hard to have resources coming to our site. Why? Because I believe we are an isolated case. Africa, a lot of a few resources coming to our side and without resources, but not too much. How much we try to volunteer. We need resources to amplify our impact, reach more people.

ANIMAL SAVE MOVEMENT



INTERVIEW



Nilgün Engin
TÜRKIYE

MENA&Africa Region
Volunteer Coordinator

For those unfamiliar with your background, who is Nilgün Engin? What motivated you to get involved in activism for the benefit of animals?

I'm based in Ankara, Türkiye. I'm originally from here and I have been working for [Animal](#)

[Safe Movement](#) for the last six years. Also, we have founded our own NGO in Ankara in 2021, so all these works are combined. We share the same values and another campaign, Plant-Based Treaty started by Animal Safe as well. I'm active for that too. So, it's all inside each other.

I can say, it's all connected and we work. How can I say we do outreach, we do videos. We perform workshops, cooking workshops, we try to have educational classes, we have documentary screenings, and anything comes to our mind or to the minds of our actors, we follow that lead because time changes and the activism types may change in time, so anything that is helpful for animals, we just adapt it and continue.

And what was your first motivation to say, I want to become an activist?

That was [Ferdinand the bull](#). It was 2018 or 19, but it was the day of sacrifice feast. We call it sacrifice feast in Türkiye and during that, families kill animals to worship God. And during one of those feasts, a bull escaped from the butcher, and he jumped into the sea and stayed in the sea. He swam like 5 days and then finally he was rescued and then bought by a singer and rescued and he lived a happy life after that. He's still alive in Angel's Farm Sanctuary and seeing hearing about his journey, it occurred to me that this is only one bull fighting for his own life. How about the others? Who will fight for them? They cannot escape their butchers like he does. He was lucky. Maybe the rope was thin, so we must be doing something on their behalf. And that was the most inspirational thing, I guess. Yeah, staying at home or trying to veganize dishes in my kitchen. Or translating a book to Türkiye was not enough. I had to be more active. I felt like that.

And what other achievements do you consider you have reached in your career as an activist?

I wouldn't say I have reached anything. Every day I feel the sadness. I feel the pressure that I'm not doing anything for them because billions, including the fishes, billions are being killed every minute, every second and we have come some distance. It is not like 6 years ago or 10 years ago. Starting from the days veganism was announced, in England, of course we have come so far here in Türkiye, in a Muslim country, we are speaking about veganism. It is something, but not enough for me at all. I wouldn't say I have succeeded in anything. I succeeded in continuing to be an activist, not to burn out. I think only success I can have is that because it's so easy to burn out. It's so easy to give up and I hope I will not. I will try to do anything. I can day by day, day after day.

You're totally right. I can feel your words. And how did you begin? How did you decide to become vegan?

That was my youngest daughter. I'm so grateful to her and I'm so angry about me that I had to learn something from her because I thought I knew everything. I was an elderly woman. Known everything, travelled everywhere, read everything. So, who could teach me anything else? But something occurred to me when I tried to commence her that veganism is just too extreme, and it would not be good for her health. Plus, it is how can I say.... it's a dream like...it is not reality. We aren't. We are living in a real world. So, trying to convince her when I read and watched everything. I said I cannot be a part of it and how come I didn't hear about it? I honestly thought that cows were able to give milk 365 days a year.

I really thought it. I wasn't an ignorant person, but I thought it was like that. So, I understood that several things are hidden behind the walls, behind the slaughterhouses. In fact, in Türkiye we have the feast. We sacrifice feast we can. I see animals being killed, but of course I did not witness at all. I close my eyes to that. I never knew that half of the chicks were killed because they were males.

It is obvious this is science, but I did not maybe dig into it. I did not learn it. Just my daughter, she led me to this way and I overnight within two weeks after I saw Gary Yourofsky. At some point, I think it is the 11th or the 20th minute he shows a piece from the slaughterhouse. It is 3 minutes. At the first minute I said no, I cannot watch it. I cannot watch it so. And he asks by the end of the video, he says, is this good for your eyes? I think it's not. If it's not good for your eyes, why would it be good for your stomach as well? It's I know veganism is not only about stomach, but all the torture. It is not for me. It is not for my heart or my stomach, for my brain. So that was the turning point.

Some society groups and academic experts have proposed that ministries of education and higher education institutions incorporate the topics of animal rights and animal welfare into their study contents. What do you think about this? Do you have any example of this? Or maybe you can tell us what is the situation in your country?

In Türkiye we are far away from adopting such topics in our education, but there are several vegan people in the academic area, psychology, and sociology. In those branches we have many activists as well as economics or administration branches. In social sciences, there are people who are working on animal ethics, they are trying to push their professors to add topics like that into their curriculum. But at this point we have not made a positive progress about it, I would say. However, if education at all levels, not only academics,

but primary schools, secondary schools, high schools, if they could include animal ethics or in biologic classes about the nature of animals that would be so beneficial for the children so that they can integrate those values we already have to their lives. Education is everything, as we know, that holds the community to a further level.

How do you see the anti-speciesism movement evolution in your country and your region like the activist itself? What are the main challenges you have and how much have you progressed as anti-speciesism movement?

I think we have made some progress compared to 10 years ago. It is not enough, but still young generation, especially after the COVID outbreak, people were able to stay inside. Think about our existence. Think about the relationship between us and the other creatures and the way we live. They thought about it a lot, and I think veganism came into arise during those times. So we are, we made the progress and culture and religion effects, of course, such approaches in the one hand.

Muslim communities are so merciful. They have mercy towards other animals, but at the same time, Allah orders that all the creatures are created for us for the humans, therefore, we can do anything we like to them. So, at this point, when as vegans, when we are speaking to the other people, they could easily say that you are being an infidel because you are not speaking the words of God, but you're doing something else. When we spoke about mercy and kindness to other creatures, as Allah orders at the same time, there comes in the conflict that the religion at all levels, I think not only Muslim, but the other religions as well. It's hard to communicate at some point, especially I have an experience like most of the vegans are atheists and when they communicate with religious people, sometimes it is hard. It is not easy to convince the other party. Also, maybe the wars and economical status of people in our region puts animal rights at the far point of the rights movement. If we are talking about the rights, human rights are not well protected in our region, so sometimes it is hard to come to that point of negotiating the animal rights with other people.

I know the purpose of Plant-Based Treaty is to engage politically the governments of the cities that you are looking to implement the Plant-Based Treaty and I want to know how did you involve into this? How is it going in your city? What are you working for and what authorities have you been talking with in your city?

Yes, I was talking from the ethics wise of the veganism, but coming from Plant-Based Treaty wise, yes, it is crucial that we adopt plant-based diets. It is the emissions rising from animal agriculture, it is high, almost 1/3, and then seeing this reality, communities should swift to plant-based diets as soon as possible. So talking, starting the conversation from this point, even in our cities, in our countries, in our region, we can reach to the minds and hearts of the authorities.

It was 2021, the Plant-Based Treaty was announced, launched and we were the first ones to campaign for the treaty. Then it was a city which used to have a vegan festival because the mayor of the city had a daughter, a vegetarian daughter, so he was aware of veganism and vegetarian diet. So, we went to him, and we talked to him about Plant-Based Treaty, and he was positive and then he adopted it. I mean, first he of course endorsed the Plant-Based Treaty. Then he collaborated with us to organize the next festival, and it was an amazing festival. Over 200 000 people joined and later, he introduced me to the cafes and restaurants of the city, and I was there to, how can I say, train the chefs of those restaurants to adopt some vegan options to their menu.

Furthermore, he opened a vegan kiosk, a buffet, a small caravan selling only vegan products. So, he made bold steps. He started to buy only vegan and cruel free options, cruel free products for sanitary purposes to the municipality and he was willing to adopt more. But then he was changed. He was not elected for a second time.

However, we made a collaboration with Ankara municipality, my city. They are not endorsing yet. They are far from endorsing the treaty, but they are allowing me to have workshops with women and elderly people. I am showing them how to grow micro sprouts and micro greens which are very healthy of course compared to the seed itself. So, when we are showing this, when we are conducting this workshop, we can talk about plant-based diets as well. And recently we made a connection with Denizli municipality. It's in the southwest of Türkiye and they promised that they will add vegan options to their menus in Denizli municipality cafes. Plus, they are considering to open a vegan buffet as well.

So I think these might seem like minor changes, but considering the amount of people they are addressing, the municipalities play a big role in changing the attitudes the customs of people. So, changing the mind of a mayor can change the mind of thousands, maybe millions of people of the city. This is why we are

focusing on Plant-Based Treaty to make a big system change in food systems, hopefully.

Can you share a case that you know where the speciesism practice has been eliminated or reduced in your country or in your region or maybe around the world?

As far as I know the cruelty free products for how to say the cosmetic products because I think it is the easiest step a person can take. It's not related with their food. It's not so much. So, I think this is a big win for us. Anybody who starts to use cruelty free and vegan products in cosmetics start to think about what they are consuming in other branches like food, like leather or wool they wear. So, I think this is the major spot we have made a difference in Türkiye. It's forbidden. And in some parts of Africa as well and Israel, as far as I know in Middle East, but other than that.

I'm sorry to admit that even with the dogs we have lost several cases like we thought we were able to protect at least our companion animals like dogs and cats, but the recent law, the change law, led to a huge loader in Türkiye and dogs are being collected from streets by municipalities and they are prisoned and euthanized. Although maybe we took a good step in cosmetics, we couldn't protect our companion animals, stray animals.

A diet that includes animal products (meat, dairy, eggs, honey) is normalized around the world, and global consumption continues to rise. According to [FAO](#) projections, by 2050 global meat consumption may increase up to 73 % compared to early-2000s levels, driven primarily by population growth and rising incomes in developing countries. More recent data indicates that the combined production and consumption of meat, dairy, and eggs is set to increase by 17 % by 2034, with agricultural and fish production rising 14 % globally over the same period. Caloric intake from animal-source foods is expected to climb 6 % worldwide, and as much as 24 % in lower-middle-income countries ([OECD/FAO](#)). In contrast, there is extensive documentation of the negative impact on the environment, animal welfare, and public health caused by industries based on animal products. What is your perspective on this situation? What actions can be taken to shift this trend?

This sometimes makes me feel depressed because I cannot believe that people are not seeing the clear picture in front of them. We are consuming the world within our plates. We are doing it right there and we are not stopping to do so. It is cultural. Maybe, of course it is basically capitalism because the major

companies are food producers, and they are making the biggest amount of money out of animal products.

And to stop them sometimes I feel like I'm so small or the movement is so small, but still, it doesn't mean that we should stop and just give in. We must continue to tell it, on every occasion, on every level. It may be like campaigns, like Plant-Based Treaty and system change level, it may be at educational level, like we talked before, because education is everything if we can raise children, including animals to their ethical values that can change everything. I don't know if there's enough time to raise our children because it's coming so close, not only the climate change, the planetary crisis, we are exceeding all the boundaries. And I don't know if we have enough time, but still, we will be on the right side of the history, trying to do our best to stop it. It is not only about saving animals but saving the planet and ourselves. As a ruling species, we have the responsibility to not stop talking about it, and at all levels.

What is your perception about this? Do you think the consumption is really increasing or otherwise do you think veganism is gaining more and more people every day? What do you think from your own perception?

I just heard about a poll about people answering the questions whether they would pay more to stop the climate crisis, like if they buy a brand caring enough about the climate crisis and if it is more expensive than the other product, would they buy it? And 70 % said yes, thinking that people are aware of what is coming next, because the flood is in our door now. The floods are everywhere, or the wildfires are everywhere. We can see the glaciers coming down, so people are aware what is coming next. I think people are willingly educated. People are willingly turning into something else. They are trying to change at least. Decreasing the consumption they used to have, but I'm also hearing about the companies creating new markets in Africa, telling that Africans need food and when they say food, it's of course animal food, animal product. It is as if the other is not food. They are importing the food that is not consumed in Europe to Africa as a gift.

We have heard about the charities during Christmas giving presents, giving chicks and chickens to the families in Africa. Or India, but they are not native animals of those places, and they bring the bird fluid. So they are changing the climate of the world like this. Or today, my friend has been chasing a ship coming from Uruguay to Bandirma, Türkiye and carrying around 2900 cows for one and a half month and 40 of them are dead. There is a pandemic in the ship.

So, these animals will soon be let out and maybe they used as meat traveling from

Uruguay, bringing illness to Turkish people. This is not normal, and this is not ethical at all, but also it is not normal or healthy at all. But the system is pushing it because we couldn't change the mind of the people like meat is for rich people and when you eat meat you are healthy, you grow big, and you grow strong. So, a man should eat meat. We didn't. We were not able to change this whole wrong idea. We have to do that. We need to keep saying that this is not the reality.

Now this is a space for closing message to talk about any other topic that is from your interest or any other thing that it's in your mind about the rights of animals.

I would say if quoting from [Tolstoy](#), we cannot end the wars, we cannot end the cruelty without ending a consuming food on our plate, if we have meat on in our plate, we will always have blood everywhere. It's the torture and the destruction rise from the plate. It is so connected. If we could only see the resemblance, if we can see the connection, everything can change. If we have not only kindness and mercy, if we have the consciousness of ethics, we must include animals. It is not shocking to include animals to our ethical cares. They feel, they dream, they have plans just like us and it is so normal to add them to our ethical values. Why shouldn't we? I keep wondering why not? Why do not people understand or see it the way I see?



INTERVIEW



Lars Corvinus-Olesen
DENMARK

Communicator and activist

For those unfamiliar with your background, Who is Lars Corvinus Olesen? What motivated him to get involved in activism for the benefit of animals?

I am the press manager at [Dyrenes Alliance](#), an animal rights organization in Denmark working

to make veganism mainstream and to promote plant-based food systems. I grew up in western Denmark –farmer’s country– with a family history rooted in fishing, fish exports, and even mink farming. For the first 27 years of my life, I never really questioned how animals were treated or raised for food.



That changed when I met people who inspired me: dedicated vegan activists and friends who introduced me to plant-based food. What began as a new culinary experience quickly became something deeper. It opened my eyes and made me question whether eating animals was truly necessary.

Today, I am motivated by indignation –by the horror of how little respect and consideration we give to other beings. That feeling fuels my commitment to creating change. My life goal is to see a vegan world within my lifetime. With my background, having a master’s degree in communication, I know that the world we live in is socially constructed. That also means it can be deconstructed and rebuilt in new, more compassionate ways. For me, that possibility is not only necessary –it is deeply exciting.

What are the main projects and achievements you have collaborated on throughout your career as an activist?

My journey as an activist began on the streets, participating in Anonymous for the Voiceless [Cubes of Truth](#). I would stand silently, holding a television screen showing the realities of animal agriculture –the standard practices of exploitation, confinement, and killing that most people never see. Our role wasn’t to lecture, but to ask passersby how they felt when confronted with these images. That method, rooted in reflection rather than confrontation, was powerful. It taught me how to engage people in open, honest conversations, and it gave me a deep understanding of the challenges and dilemmas in advocating for a vegan world. It was a very formative and strengthening beginning for me.

Soon after, I became head of press for a Danish vegan political party project. For three years we created a massive wave of attention in Denmark. Though we never formally became a political party, we managed to collect over 100 000 personal email addresses on the streets and online, raised several million kroner in grassroots crowdfunding, and invested more in Facebook ads in a single year than the biggest agricultural lobby in the country at that time. The project was so widely covered that I would get one or two calls or emails from journalists every single day, asking us for our perspective. That gave us invaluable opportunities to explain vegan philosophy and values to a broad audience, sparking public debate and education.

My focus –then and now– has always been on legitimacy. From my academic background in communication, I know that legitimacy is the foundation for societal change. I see it as my mission to make veganism not only accepted but

regarded as the most normal, necessary, and respected choice. That's why I paid so much attention to how we were portrayed. Traditionally, activists are often shown in black hoodies, speaking in radical –however, still honest– terms that many people find alienating. I wanted to change that stereotype. So, when our activists appeared on TV, I would hand them ironed blue shirts etc. and carefully curate the experience, ensuring that the media met a diverse and approachable image of vegans. This strategy helped us move the debate from the margins into the mainstream. Although the project eventually collapsed due to internal conflict, externally we were remarkably successful. We created constructive debate, public understanding, and for a moment, a real cultural shift.

Today, I am the press and PR manager for Dyrenes Alliance, a youth-driven animal rights organization in Denmark. We have 16 local chapters, organize more than 400 events a year, and empower young people to become leaders in the movement. My role has been to elevate the organization's legitimacy and visibility to a new level. A clear sign of progress is that major Danish media outlets now call us directly, asking for our perspectives. That didn't happen before. Getting our voice on TV and radio has been one of my proudest achievements in building the organization's presence.

One project I am especially proud of is our work at [Folkemødet](#), Denmark's biggest political festival. I developed the concept of having politicians put on chef hats, step behind a grill, and cook plant-based burgers and samples for the public. Instead of us serving food, the politicians themselves become the ones introducing people to plant-based eating. The symbolism is powerful: it shows leaders literally serving change. In the very first year, we had the Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Jakob Jensen, wearing a giant chef's hat with our badge, standing in front of a banner that read «Eat Plants Instead», with images of animals around him. He grilled plant-based burgers and spoke live on national TV about why we should eat more plant-based food. That moment –seeing a government minister not only supporting but embodying our message in such a visible and symbolic way– stands out as one of the biggest achievements of my career so far.

For me, these projects –from grassroots activism on the streets, to national political campaigns, to mainstreaming veganism through media and political engagement– are all part of the same mission: to raise the legitimacy of veganism, dismantle stereotypes, and make a vegan world the natural, respected future.

How did you come to adopt a vegan diet? What were the key factors that led you to make that decision?

My path to a vegan diet was not a sudden decision but rather a gradual awakening shaped by different influences in my life. At first, it was very personal. My girlfriend at the time loved cooking with fresh vegetables and rarely used much meat. She never pressured me, but she inspired me by preparing beautiful, flavorful dishes. One day she bought a vegetarian cookbook, and every evening after work –I was working in a PR and press bureau then, and she as an architect– we would try a new recipe together. For me, this was eye-opening. Growing up, my meals were typically only seasoned with salt and pepper, so suddenly experiencing food that was vibrant, colorful, and full of flavor was a revelation. I also noticed how my body felt healthier when eating this way.

At the same time, other influences reinforced this shift. Our office canteen switched to a new caterer who served mostly vegetables and only small amounts of meat, which made eating lighter and healthier feel natural. Around that time, Denmark’s main TV channel began highlighting the climate impact of meat consumption, and it struck me that by eating more plant-based meals, I could also contribute to something larger than myself.

The turning point came while I was writing my master’s thesis in communication –specifically about legitimacy. By then, I had broken up with my girlfriend and moved back to my parents’ home to finish my thesis. Procrastination led me to spend a lot of time on social media, where the newly emerging vegan political party in Denmark kept posting facts about animal agriculture. Soon, algorithms led me to videos by activists like [Earthling Ed](#), who asked people fundamental questions about why they ate animals. These arguments resonated with me deeply. I even ended up analyzing Denmark’s biggest dairy producer in my thesis, questioning their legitimacy and the social narratives that made drinking cow’s milk seem «natural».

Interestingly, my parents were strongly opposed to plant-based eating, which only fueled my curiosity further. In those months of working on my thesis, I essentially gave myself a crash course in veganism. Social considerations kept me from going fully vegan while living at home, but once I moved to Copenhagen and became involved with the vegan political party, I committed fully. From that point on, I never looked back.

Some civil society groups and academic experts have proposed that Ministries of Education and higher education institutions incorporate the topics of animal rights and animal welfare into their study contents. Why should this be done, and how could it be effectively integrated into formal education? Are there examples of where this is already taking place? What is the current situation in your country?

In Denmark today, the formal integration of animal rights into education is still very limited. At a few of our largest universities, summer courses are offered on animal law and animal ethics. I have attended these myself, and they are incredibly useful and eye-opening. They encourage students to question the world around them in new ways and to confront moral dilemmas that most people rarely think about. Beyond these courses, however, there are no formal programs, and it is left up to individual teachers to decide whether to include animal-related topics in their curriculum.

I believe this is not just useful but essential. Education is where we shape how future generations think, what values they carry, and what they consider legitimate. If we want to change our culture's relationship with animals, then animal rights must be part of the conversation in classrooms and lecture halls. Including it in formal education would help normalize the idea that animals are not resources for us to use, but individuals with their own interests and intrinsic value.

This is not simply about awareness. It is about reshaping cultural norms. When a subject enters the education system, it gains legitimacy and permanence. Just as human rights, sustainability, and climate issues are now integral to many study programs, so too should animal rights become a recognized and respected part of the academic landscape. To me, this represents one of the higher steps in the journey toward a vegan world: when the rights of animals are no longer a fringe idea but are embedded in our culture, institutions, and everyday knowledge.

At the constitutional level, what is the current legal situation in Denmark and Europe regarding animal rights and welfare?

In Denmark, the current framework is an animal welfare law that has recently been updated to state that animals are sentient beings who should be treated with respect and care. On paper, this sounds like real progress. But the reality is very different. The very same law contains numerous exceptions that allow animals to be exploited for human purposes –such as agriculture, testing, or

industrial production. In practice, this means that while we acknowledge their sentience, we still subject them to lives of confinement, suffering, and premature death.

This contradiction is at the heart of the issue. The law speaks of respect, but it does not truly require it. We still forcibly impregnate animals, separate mothers from their babies, and mutilate their bodies to fit the needs of production. We continue to test chemicals and medicines on animals, even though scientific alternatives exist that are often more accurate for predicting human outcomes. The law legitimizes these practices under the banner of «necessity» but in reality, they reflect outdated traditions and entrenched economic interests.

So, while the recognition of animals as sentient beings is a symbolic step forward, it is not yet a meaningful one. Until the law fully aligns with its own principles –protecting animals regardless of whether humans’ profit from them– it will remain a hollow promise. The real discussion we need is how to implement a legal framework that genuinely respects animals, not just in words, but in action.

Speciesism, understood as a form of discrimination against those who do not belong to a certain species, is present in all countries and manifests in various ways, such as raising animals for human consumption, bullfighting, animal fights, among others. What can be done by civil society, universities, and governments to reduce or eliminate these practices that are often referred to as sociocultural?

For me, the struggle against speciesism is, at its core, a question of legitimacy. Human history shows us that culture is not fixed –we shape it. We once accepted forms of discrimination based on skin color, gender, or other differences, but we fight to overcome these injustices. The next step in this moral evolution is to address speciesism: the discrimination against beings simply because they do not belong to the human species.

Civil society, universities, and governments each have vital roles to play in this process. Education is key. By incorporating the topic of speciesism into curricula, research, and public debate, we legitimize the idea that animals deserve equal consideration. Governments can further this by embedding animal rights into policy and law, ensuring that the ethical treatment of animals is not just a personal choice but a societal standard. Civil society organizations

can create awareness, build movements, and keep pushing the issue into the mainstream.

But change also requires more than critique –it requires alternatives. One of the most powerful tools we have is showcasing plant-based living. When people taste plant-based food and see that it is delicious, accessible, and satisfying, they realize they do not need to participate in speciesist systems of exploitation. This is why it is so important that politicians, universities, and institutions not only talk about animal rights but also experience plant-based solutions themselves.

From a communication perspective, it is about balancing fear control and danger control: we must expose the horrors of speciesism, but always pair that with a clear, positive solution –a menu where we eat plants and use alternatives that do not involve animals. Welfare reforms alone will not dismantle speciesism. What we need is a cultural and structural shift that normalizes a life without exploiting animals, and that recognizes animals as beings we coexist with, not beings we dominate.

What has been the evolution of antispeciesist activism in Denmark and Europe? What are the main challenges in this region regarding animal rights? How much progress has been made, and in which areas is there still a need for greater visibility and further work?

When I look at the evolution of antispeciesist activism in Denmark –and to some extent in Europe– I see a clear trajectory. Many people start their journey by going vegan and taking part in grassroots street activism. Outreach events such as Cubes of Truth have been an important entry point, creating space for individuals to show the realities of animal exploitation and to engage people in conversations. For a long time, however, the movement has been split. Many of the larger, established organizations in Europe have focused primarily on animal welfare campaigns. These campaigns often aim to improve conditions or remove the very worst practices from the industry. They have achieved some successes, attracted funding, and built large memberships –but their work has largely remained within the framework of making animal exploitation «less harmful», rather than questioning its legitimacy.

This has meant that explicitly antispeciesist activism has often been limited to the grassroots, while mainstream organizations pursued incremental reforms. Globally, you do see exceptions –organizations like [PETA](#) have built their entire identity around an antispeciesist framework. But in Europe, many of the well-

funded groups such as The Humane League UK, Four Paws, Animal Equality, Animal Protection Denmark, Anima International or VGT in Austria have concentrated heavily on welfare. The encouraging shift I see now is that more funding and energy are beginning to flow into projects that directly promote plant-based systems and vegan living. This is important because it allows activists to work in alignment with their values, rather than settling for half-measures that still leave animals trapped in systems of exploitation.

In Denmark, Dyrenes Alliance is part of this evolution. For years, the organization did welfare-focused work, but now we are explicitly antispeciesist and vegan-focused. We have grown to a point where we don't need to compromise our message. Similar developments can be seen in the UK with organizations like Animal Rising, Viral Vegans in Finland and Every Animal in Ukraine, which now operate with a fully antispeciesist approach.

The challenges remain significant. The biggest one, in my view, is the continued dominance of welfare campaigns. These efforts often take years, absorb vast amounts of time and resources, and sometimes result in very little concrete change in the big picture –companies may even fail to follow through on their commitments. Campaigns around cage-free eggs or «slower-growing chickens», for example, show people the worst aspects of animal agriculture. But instead of telling people, this is wrong– stop supporting it altogether, the ask often becomes a softer one: buy a slightly better product or avoid only the worst options. This, I think, risks being dishonest toward the animals, because the truth is that exploitation remains exploitation, no matter how you label it.

In 2025, with plant-based food alternatives widely available and increasingly legitimate in many Western European countries, I believe it should be clear: the solution is not «better» animal products, but no animal products at all. Yet one of the main obstacles antispeciesist activists face is the public's reliance on welfare labels –«organic», «grass-fed», «free-range»– which give the illusion of ethical consumption while perpetuating the same underlying violence.

In terms of progress, there has undoubtedly been progress. Public awareness of how animals are treated is at an all-time high, largely thanks to welfare campaigns (even if I don't agree with the call-to-actions) and the tireless work of investigators who have documented the reality inside farms and slaughterhouses. I recognize their pivotal role in putting these images and truths into the public domain. Today, it's almost impossible to meet someone who hasn't at least seen or heard about how badly animals are treated in industrial farming. That level of awareness is an achievement in itself. What we

still lack is the full courage to translate this awareness into the obvious conclusion: if this is how animals are treated when they are seen as objects for our pleasure, we should not be eating them at all.

Where more work is needed is in visibility and clarity of message. We need to speak directly about animal rights –not just improved welfare, but the right of animals not to be exploited in the first place. Civil society groups, governments, and universities must build legitimacy for a vegan future, and activists must insist on honesty. Only then can antispeciesist activism in Europe reach its full potential.

Welfare work has its limits. It can only go so far, and in many cases, it stalls at small improvements that leave the underlying exploitation intact. The real goal must be much bigger: not to improve conditions within these industries, but to end them altogether. That requires a consistent message that always points toward the alternative –a plant-based future where animals are no longer used as resources at all.

This is where more visibility and further work are urgently needed. We need to shift the conversation from «less suffering» to «no exploitation». That means being clear: animals have rights, and the logical step is to stop eating them. Future progress lies in making that message as visible, legitimate, and mainstream as possible.

Another area for further work is building stronger synergies with other actors in society who are already calling for the same dietary shift. We now have governments adopting national plant-based action plans like Denmark. Companies has started to voice plant-based visions as well, dedicating themselves to switching from animal products to plant-based alternatives. The United Nations has issued statements supporting plant-based transitions. The World Health Organization is recommending plant-forward diets. Climate organizations like Greenpeace and many others are already pushing for reduced meat consumption. These actors strengthen the case for change, yet the animal rights movement too often remains stuck in a welfare frame.

The task ahead is to align with these global and institutional voices and to be just as effective as they are in saying: the solution is not «better conditions», but no meat. The solution is plant-based living –for the animals, for the planet, and for ourselves. That is where the movement needs to place its energy if we want real transformation.

Can you share a case, as an example, where a speciesist practice has been eliminated or reduced, in your country or the world?

Yes, there are several examples where speciesist practices have been eliminated or significantly reduced, both in Denmark and globally. Several Fashion Weeks around the world have cut ties with the fur industry and won't use fur in their collections for the line-up. Copenhagen Fashion Week has also cut out the use of exotic skins.

Globally, we see similar progress. Bullfighting has been banned in several countries and regions where it was once defended as «cultural heritage». Greyhound racing has been outlawed in many U.S. states. In Europe, the use of wild animals in circuses is increasingly banned –a practice once considered normal entertainment, now recognized as cruel and outdated. And in Brussels, horse-drawn carriages have recently been replaced entirely with electric carriages. This is a beautiful example of how traditions can be honored and continued in new, innovative ways that no longer rely on animal exploitation.

What all these examples show is that practices which once seemed permanent and unquestionable parts of culture can change –and change quickly once their legitimacy erodes. The same will happen with raising and killing animals for food. Just like fur farming, circuses, or horse carriages, animal agriculture will one day be seen as unnecessary and unacceptable, and society will adapt with better alternatives.

A diet that includes animal products (meat, dairy, eggs, honey) is normalized around the world, and global consumption continues to rise. According to [FAO](#) projections, by 2050 global meat consumption may increase up to 73 % compared to early-2000s levels, driven primarily by population growth and rising incomes in developing countries. More recent data indicates that the combined production and consumption of meat, dairy, and eggs is set to increase by 17 % by 2034, with agricultural and fish production rising 14 % globally over the same period. Caloric intake from animal-source foods is expected to climb 6 % worldwide, and as much as 24 % in lower-middle-income countries ([OECD/FAO](#)). In contrast, there is extensive documentation of the negative impact on the environment, animal welfare, and public health caused by industries based on animal products. What is your perspective on this situation? What actions can be taken to shift this trend?

The projections of rising global consumption of animal products are deeply worrying, because we already know the devastating impacts these industries

have on animals, the environment, and human health. To me, the key issue is not simply demand but the structures that artificially sustain animal-based industries.

First, the economic system. In Europe, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) still distributes subsidies largely based on land use, regardless of whether that land is used to grow food for humans or feed for farmed animals. This means billions of euros every year are keeping animal agriculture artificially afloat. Without these subsidies, many animal-based industries would simply not be economically viable, especially as climate change and resource scarcity make production more expensive. Redirecting subsidies away from feed and animal products toward plant-based foods would probably be the single most powerful step governments could take to accelerate a just transition.

Second, the cultural system. Food is more than calories –it is culture, identity, and tradition. That is why we need to reshape food culture so that plant-based eating is seen as both normal and desirable. Every country has traditional dishes that are plant-based at their core. Highlighting these dishes as part of national heritage can help redefine cultural pride in a way that aligns with a sustainable and compassionate future.

Third, the regulatory system. At the heart of the problem is that animals are still legally defined as property. As long as they are treated as objects for human use, their exploitation will continue to be justified. Recognizing animals as individuals with inherent worth, rather than as commodities, must be one of the final goals of our movement.

So, the actions are clear: change the economic incentives by ending subsidies for animal agriculture; change the regulatory framework so animals are not legally regarded as property; and change cultural norms so that plant-based food becomes the foundation of our food systems. When these three areas align, the supposed inevitability of rising animal product consumption will no longer hold. Instead, we will see the opposite: a rapid cultural, economic, and legal shift toward a plant-based world.

Lastly, if you would like to add a closing message to end this interview.

I want to end by expressing my deepest gratitude to all the activists and animal advocates who came before me. Your work mattered. Your courage and your actions shaped the movement we have today, and we carry your torch forward. None of you are forgotten.

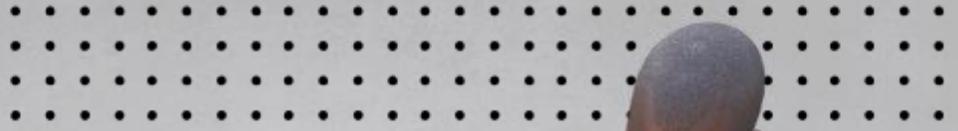
To everyone in the present generation: we stand on the shoulders of those who paved the way, and we continue the fight for a world where animals are not seen as property, food, entertainment, or resources with a «purpose» for humans. Instead, we fight for a world where animals are recognized as individuals in their own right –beings we can coexist with in constructive, respectful ways, not beings we must own or control.

Part of achieving this future means rethinking the very first lessons we pass on to our children. From an early age, children are taught to discriminate between animals –to love some and to eat others. That cycle of discrimination must end if we are to build a truly compassionate world.

So, to everyone reading this: let this be your inspiration. Leave animals off the plate. Choose plant-based. Take action –for the animals, for the environment, and for future generations. The system we have today is one of destruction, but together, we can build something better.

Thanks for the magazine and everybody involved to print this special edition focusing on speciesism –this too, as a part of the journey.

ANONYMOUS for the VOICELESS



INTERVIEW



Serge Magashu

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

**Environmental protection
and animal rights activist**

Who is Serge Magashu? What motivated him to get involved in activism for the benefit of animals?

My name is Serge Magashu. I am a Congolese activist passionate about environmental

protection and animal rights. Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo on the island of Idjwi in Bugarula. I was very early on aware of animal suffering and the consequences of the destruction of nature on the balance of life.

My commitment was born from the alarming observation of animal abuse, poaching, and deforestation, which threaten biodiversity. Convinced that compassion for animals is inseparable from respect for human life and the planet, I have chosen to take concrete action through awareness campaigns, field activities, and community projects focused on peaceful coexistence between humans and animals. For me, defending animals also means defending justice, peace, and environmental sustainability.

With [Anonymous for the Voiceless](#), I carry out the [Cubes of Truth](#) to give voice to the defense of animals, since many people here mistreat animals, exploit them, and I have committed myself to protecting animals because of that mistreatment.

In my project to cultivate vegetables to reduce hunger in my community, I mobilize people to become vegan, to also reduce meat consumption, and these are my current goals in the community where I live.

Do people change their mindset and vision with your ideas?

So far, five people have changed their routines, and together we are developing the project with joint activities, since, at the moment, others refuse to participate due to their customs and habits of exploiting animals.

How did you come to adopt a vegan diet? What were the key factors that led you to make that decision?

I have been vegan for five years. The process began in my childhood when I used to eat meat and could not decide for myself. When I became an adult, I decided to change those habits.

What was the precise reason for that change?

By seeing the way animals are treated, which I did not like. Also, through recent studies I've done on the subject, I've been able to understand the mistreatment animals suffer and the pain they experience. The way an animal is treated affects me emotionally and I do not like it. These are my reasons.

For me, it's about recognizing those feelings and ways people treat animals, which I deeply dislike. I studied in Goma using veganism books to help me let go of those practices and stop eating meat. I also looked for an organization to work with on veganism topics, since there are none here, and that is why I

sought organizations abroad that work on such projects, to collaborate with them.

Are you working to create an organization in your town?

Indeed, that is what I would like to do. However, this involves a lot of administrative paperwork to create an association, which requires many formalities. For now, I have focused on gathering people who share the same interests, so that later we can think about forming an association for these kinds of veganism projects.

Some civil society groups and academic experts have proposed that Ministries of Education and higher education institutions incorporate the topics of animal rights and animal welfare into their study contents. Why should this be done, and how could it be effectively integrated into formal education? Are there examples of where this is already taking place? What is the current situation in your country?

Integrating animal rights and welfare into formal education is essential because it helps develop a culture of compassion, responsibility, and environmental awareness from an early age. Education shapes values, and when children and young adults learn to respect and protect animals, they also acquire empathy, coexistence, and environmental ethics, all essential elements for sustainable development and peace. But in our country, there are several problems to solve, including war, and to achieve this, we should raise awareness in Congo to find a large number of vegans because the number of vegans is very low, and this is leading to war.

Is it being worked on in universities as an awareness topic within educational programs?

Yes, it is possible to propose this in universities here, although it requires a great mobilization of people. Talking about veganism and analyzing the topic could at least start the discussion with some depth.

It could be easier to integrate into university programs; I can investigate whether this is being discussed in universities or at least find out if it is a valued or studied subject.

But it is not directly addressed in schools, high schools, or universities?

It is not something currently included in official programs, which is why we need to convince the authorities to carry out activities like this, though it sometimes requires a lot of explanation. What we do now are activities to talk about the topic, but it's still difficult. Our efforts focus on raising awareness informally in the community and in public spaces. It is difficult for it to be formally taught in schools yet; it is not established in the country's educational programs.

At the constitutional level, what is the current legal situation in Congo and Africa regarding animal rights and welfare?

The legal situation regarding animal rights and welfare in Africa, and particularly in Congo, remains very limited and uneven across countries. Although animal protection is gradually gaining recognition, it often remains secondary to environmental, agricultural, or public health issues in Congo.

To date, the Congolese Constitution does not explicitly recognize animal rights. However, some laws indirectly address their protection through: The Forestry Code (2002) and the Nature Conservation Act (2014), which aim to protect wildlife from poaching and illegal trade in protected species. The Environmental Code (2011), which encourages the preservation of biodiversity and the sustainable management of natural resources.

These laws are primarily focused on ecological conservation rather than animal welfare per se. There is currently no specific law on animal abuse, breeding conditions, or domestic or companion animals.

However, several local organizations and activists, including my movement, are advocating for legislative reform to integrate the concept of animal welfare into Congolese public policy.

In Congo, as in many African countries, the legal framework for animal protection remains embryonic, but awareness is growing. The future will depend on the political will to integrate animal sentience into national constitutions and laws, to ensure more comprehensive protection –moral, ecological, and legal.

The legislation applies mostly to «rare» animals found in the country's national parks, such as gorillas, chimpanzees, and okapis. These animals are protected by laws that prohibit killing them.

Another sensitive issue is poaching. Although there are rules to prevent it, since we are in a state of war, poachers are widespread; there are many illegal weapons, which means they keep hunting. Poaching is therefore very common, and both poachers and civilians have firearms, making the law fragile. Meanwhile, animals like ducks and chickens are often killed for food –it’s mainly an issue of hunting wild animals.

Speciesism, understood as a form of discrimination against those who do not belong to a certain species, is present in all countries and manifests in various ways, such as raising animals for human consumption, bullfighting, animal fights, among others. What can be done by civil society, universities, and governments to reduce or eliminate these practices that are often referred to as sociocultural?

To change this situation, we should at least have organizations that develop awareness plans and gather a large number of people to give animals a voice. That would help pressure Congolese authorities to enact such laws. Without that, there won’t be any direct impact on the population, so the first step must be awareness and generating social impact.

Awareness is important for people to understand the problem, but hunger, displacement, and war do not help government leaders to make changes. All these problems and insecurity reduce the chances of implementing reforms or projects. That’s why what we mainly focus on is awareness, because insecurity makes it very hard for change to happen in our community.

Do you consider that the key change is awareness?

Yes, and also for people to come with me to see the changes and the progress in the activities I’ve carried out –at least that, along with the points I’ve mentioned before.

What has been the evolution of anti-speciesism activism in Congo and Africa? What are the main challenges in this region regarding animal rights? How much progress has been made, and in which areas is there still a need for greater visibility and further work?

Anti-speciesism activism in Africa –and particularly in Congo– is still in its emerging phase, but it is growing steadily as awareness of environmental, ethical, and social issues increases. For a long time, the struggle for animal rights was overshadowed by other urgent concerns such as poverty, conflict,

and human rights. However, a new generation of activists is now linking animal welfare, climate justice, and sustainable development as interconnected causes.

In Congo, activism for animals began mostly through wildlife conservation, focusing on protecting endangered species like gorillas, elephants, and okapis. Over time, this conservation focus started expanding into a broader ethical movement that also includes domestic animals, farm animals, and vegan advocacy.

Anti-speciesist activism in Congo and across Africa is at a turning point: it is evolving from small, isolated efforts to a growing movement that connects animal liberation, climate action, and social justice. The foundations have been laid; what is needed is visibility, legal recognition, and stronger institutional support to ensure long-term impact.

A diet that includes animal products (meat, dairy, eggs, honey) is normalized around the world, and global consumption continues to rise. According to [FAO](#) projections, by 2050 global meat consumption may increase up to 73 % compared to early-2000s levels, driven primarily by population growth and rising incomes in developing countries. More recent data indicates that the combined production and consumption of meat, dairy, and eggs is set to increase by 17 % by 2034, with agricultural and fish production rising 14 % globally over the same period. Caloric intake from animal-source foods is expected to climb 6 % worldwide, and as much as 24 % in lower-middle-income countries ([OECD/FAO](#)). In contrast, there is extensive documentation of the negative impact on the environment, animal welfare, and public health caused by industries based on animal products. What is your perspective on this situation? What actions can be taken to shift this trend?

To change these trends, as you mention, we need to return to the topic of awareness, which can begin in schools. This requires the involvement of civil society to bring back the topic of veganism. However, for many reasons, these issues are not openly discussed in society, but it all starts with raising awareness.

Are there any other cultural factors that make it difficult to spread the message, aside from the ones mentioned?

Factors that hinder the diffusion of this message include the fact that when we talk about veganism, some people are not interested in the topic –it affects

their customs. That's why we have to show them how to grow vegetables, the techniques, and the customs related to it. Another complicated factor is the type of local cuisine we have in the country, which does not highlight the advantages of plant-based food. So, we use social media to share my message in the best possible way.

All this makes it difficult to spread my message, to get people to grow vegetables or understand the benefits of veganism. For non-vegans, it is not easy to make the switch; that's why we focus on awareness, talking to people and showing them all the benefits of becoming vegan. I use techniques and books to teach them, and we can also use organizational libraries to go deeper into the topic. In addition, I use the Cube of Truth to show them how it works.

In Congo, is the consumption of different meats common?

Yes, it is common. It's expensive, and you need money to buy meat in the country. People generally don't eat meat because they can't afford it, but if they get money, they buy it. Here in the village, meat is eaten rarely, mainly ground meat, since butcher shops are far away.

It's a matter of economic means, but people would eat meat if they could.

Exactly. That's why awareness is necessary.

Lastly, if you would like to add a closing message to end this interview.

I would encourage organizations to make efforts like I do here in my town, to help people become vegan, because it is a very difficult effort, very hard work. I face many challenges to make people understand. We must make efforts and raise awareness so that people can change, and if one day deeper changes occur, it would be a joy for everyone and for all the organizations involved.

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