

# Portuguese MPs kill off attempt to ban bullfights

## Portugal

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The first attempt to ban bullfighting in Portugal was defeated by a parliamentary vote, though attendance figures indicate that its popularity is in decline.

The Party of People, Animals and Nature (PAN), which has only one MP, proposed legislation that would have prohibited an activity which has been part of the country's culture since the 19th century.

In contrast to Spain next door, where bulls are killed in the ring by a matador, in Portugal the animals' lives are not ended in front of a cheering crowd. If they are judged to have performed well, they are spared and used for breeding. Often the bulls are simply slaughtered later.

In a free vote, 31 MPs supported the bill, with 178 voting against and 13 abstentions. The ban was backed by PAN and a mixture of MPs from the Left Bloc, the Green Party, the Socialists, and the Communists. It was opposed, however, by the majority of Socialists and the centre-right Social Democratic

Party, the two biggest groups in parliament. Some of Portugal's leading bullfighters, including Luís Rouxinol and António Ribeiro Telles, attended the parliamentary debate.

The attempt to outlaw bullfighting came as analysts said a younger generation was losing interest in the spectacle which remains popular only with older people and tourists. Attendance at bullfights has been in decline, with 680,000 people going to events in 2010 compared with 377,900 last year. The number of bullfights has fallen from 307 in 2008 to 181 in 2017. Traditionally, bullfighting is more popular in the south of Portugal than in the north.

Left-wing political parties have criticised the state broadcaster RTP for showing some bullfights during prime time. André Silva, an MP for PAN, said: "The right to enjoy yourself, even if it is disguised as the cultural heritage of a people, should not be able to prevail over respect for the freedom and the physical and psychological integrity of animals, nor over the ideals of a society which rejects violence."

Others opposed the ban, claiming



**Fiesta time** Revellers packed the main square in Pamplona, Spain, yesterday, during the launch of the Chupinazo rocket, the firework that officially opened the 2018 San Fermin festival, with its daily bull runs, bullfights, music and dancing

that it denied people the choice to attend bullfighting. Telmo Correia, of the centre-right Social Democratic Party, said: "There are some people who are aficionados and some like me who have not been [to a bullfight] for years. But we are against bans."

The Portuguese Bullfighting Federation claimed that a survey found 32.7 per cent were fans of the sport while 86 per cent opposed a legal ban — figures disputed by animal rights activists. In comparison in Spain, an Ipsos Mori poll conducted last year for the

Humane Society International found only 29 per cent supported bullfighting.

The Balearic Islands became the latest region to prohibit bullfights that involve killing the animal but this was suspended after a court appeal.

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