

Hamid Fazeli, PhD  
President  
Iranian Space Agency

29 June 2011

**Via Web form**

Dear Dr Fazeli,

I write on behalf of the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Foundation, an affiliate of PETA US, the world's largest animal rights organisation, which has more than 2 million members and supporters around the globe. PETA and compassionate people everywhere were dismayed to learn of Iran's plan to send a monkey into space later this summer. PETA urges you to cancel your plans to use primates in the space programme permanently, including in flights and in associated research, as many other countries with active space-exploration programmes have done.

The use of animals for this purpose is not a sign of technological progress but a throwback to the primitive scientific ethics and techniques of the 1950s. The history of space exploration is tainted by the wasted lives and terrible deaths of animals, from Russia's first "space dog", Laika, who was baked to death in her capsule, to the hundreds of chimpanzees and other primates who have been pointlessly tormented by NASA over many decades. In addition to being unethical, animal experiments produce results that cannot be reliably applied to human beings, and this work may endanger the human astronauts you plan to send into orbit. NASA stopped sending nonhuman primates into space long ago.

The European Space Agency (ESA) – which represents Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK – has a very active space exploration programme and has publicly stated that it "declines any interest in monkey research and does not consider any need or use for such results". The ESA instead employs modern technology such as the state-of-the-art human manikin, Mastroshka, to assess radiation risks for astronauts.

Indeed, NASA ended the use of primates in space radiation experiments in the early 1990s when it determined that the results were not relevant to human astronauts. Last year, NASA's plans to restart the programme were cancelled after physicians, scientists, lay people and NASA engineers voiced strong ethical and scientific objections to the misguided plan.

We implore Iran not to repeat the mistakes of the old Western and Soviet space programmes. We are pleased to hear that Iran's space programme is intended to fulfil peaceful goals, and we trust that you will extend that consideration to animals. In the interests of progressive science, compassion and Iran's international reputation, please cancel the plans to use nonhuman primates in Iranian space research.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Alistair Currie  
Policy Adviser  
PETA UK