

## PAUL WATSON



# THE BALANCE BETWEEN LEGALITY AND JUSTICE



## THE BALANCE BETWEEN LEGALITY AND JUSTICE: THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL WATSON ACTIVISM AND HIS ARREST

Paul Watson is known as a marine conservationist and the co-founder of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, an organization dedicated to marine wildlife preservation and anti-poaching efforts. However, there may be multiple individuals named Paul Watson, and it's essential to clarify which one you are referring to. Paul Watson prône direct actions to make things move forward. His activism focused on whaling, and it was then that he decided to found Sea Shepherd to denounce the destruction of marine life and the fishing of cetaceans using heavy-handed methods (sabotage, boarding of boats). After being dismissed from Sea Shepherd in 2023 for methods deemed too extreme, he founded Sea Shepherd Origins.

Although its provocative methods and direct actions have provoked controversy, it is imperative to recognise that what is legal is not always right. He is no stranger to the law. He has been arrested five times for his actions in the past: 1979 in Canada, 1983 in Newfoundland but his sentence was quashed, 1997 in the Netherlands after an extradition request from Norway where he was released after 120 days in detention, in 2012 in Germany after an extradition request from Costa Rica. Before the charges were dropped, he spent fifteen months on the run to avoid extradition. Japan has issued an international arrest warrant via Interpol since 2012, suspecting him of involvement in incidents causing damage and injury to a Japanese whaler in 2010.

On the 21st of July 2024 he was arrested by local authorities in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, where he had stopped to refuel before continuing a mission in the North Pacific targeting a Japanese whaler. His detention was extended by twenty-eight days on 4 September to ensure his presence at the extradition hearing, to give the Danish Ministry of Justice time to examine Japan's extradition request. Following the announcement of the 73-year-old's arrest, there was a worldwide outcry, from citizens to NGOs, politicians and activists.

Activism can be defined by "the policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change" (Definition from Oxford languages). Watson's acts of activism may be seen as violence by some, but by others they are necessary interventions to defend the planet against destructive fishing practices. In Watson's case, we see a man ready to update a system that he considers ineffective in the face of the ecological emergency.

Paul Watson's arrest should serve as a catalyst for a wider discussion on environmental justice and the role of activism in today's world. Existing laws often fail to take account of the urgency and gravity of environmental crises. While entire sectors continue harmful practices under the cloak of legality, individuals like Watson choose to fight, sometimes at the risk of their freedom. Laws must evolve to meet the challenges of our time, incorporating moral and ethical considerations. Paul Watson is not just a name associated with controversy; he represents the struggle of many of us for a more just and sustainable world.

In conclusion, we must remember that our obligation as concerned citizens goes beyond simply complying with the law. We have a responsibility to question those laws. If something is legal, that does not mean it is right. The voice of Paul Watson and others like him deserves our support, not just for the actions they take, but for the future of our planet. Whether we are lobbying for reform of environmental protection laws or welcoming activists with hard-hitting methods, we must recognise the need for a radical change in the way we protect our world. Paul Watson's story is the perfect example that what is legal is not always fair.