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Athletes enraged over dog killings

SAY C.O.C. SHOULD TAKE A STAND

By KEVIN CONNOR, TORONTO SUN

SOME OF Canada's Olympic athletes are outraged the Canadian Olympic Committee won't take a stand against Athens officials who are poisoning up to 15,000 stray dogs in the city so the country looks pristine during the games. "It's horrible, but it has nothing to do with us. We have no official comment," said COC spokesman Stacey Smith.

Since Athens officials are doing this for the Olympics, it has everything to do with the COC, said Olympic runner Leah Pells.

"It makes me sick. The COC is pathetic and they need to take a stand. It's embarrassing to me that they won't do anything," Pells said.

'ILLS OF SOCIETY'

"Sporting organizations can and should influence the ills in society," said Olympic gold medal-winning wrestler Daniel Igali.

Poisoning is a slow, agonizing death, Lynda Elmy of the Toronto Humane Society said.

"We should all stand up and there should be a huge outcry against this because we are sending athletes to the games. It's just appalling," Elmy said.

AESTHETIC REASONS

Athens officials have said the city needs to be dog free for the games for aesthetic reasons, said Dianne Alden of Greek Animal Rescue Canada, which is working with international animal protection groups to stop the slaughter.

"It's deliberate, appalling -- people need to know," she said.

It's not a situation we are proud of, said George Ayfantis, spokesman for the (Greek) Embassy of the Hellenic Republic in Ottawa.

"It's not automatic that 15,000 will be killed. Poisoning dogs is traditional but now illegal. Local officials have extended autonomy and it's done at night. It's considered a minor offence and public prosecutors and police don't want to go after elected officials," he said.

"There are animal lovers around the world expressing their fears. The embassy is doing their utmost for their cause."