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Joaquin Phoenix Condemns Prosecution of Animal Rescuer in Sonoma County, Calls for Prosecution of Animal Cruelty

Zoe Rosenberg, 23, was convicted of felony conspiracy for rescuing four suffering chickens from Perdue's Petaluma Poultry slaughterhouse

NOVEMBER 24, 2025, SANTA ROSA, CA - Oscar-winning actor Joaquin Phoenix is urging the Sonoma County District Attorney to prosecute animal cruelty at Perdue's Petaluma Poultry slaughterhouse, after her office has ignored repeated reports of [documented animal cruelty](#) at the company's factory farms and slaughterhouse. Following the high-profile [conviction](#) of animal rescuer Zoe Rosenberg last month for her rescue of four suffering chickens from Perdue's Petaluma Poultry slaughterhouse, Joaquin Phoenix shared this statement:

Criminalizing people for rescuing suffering animals is a moral failure. Compassion is not a crime. When individuals step in to save a life because the system has looked the other way, they should be supported—not prosecuted. We have to decide who we are as a society: one that protects the vulnerable, or one that punishes those who try. I urge the Sonoma County District Attorney to prosecute the years of documented animal cruelty at Perdue's Petaluma Poultry slaughterhouse; not the people trying to stop it.

Ms. Rosenberg, an animal cruelty investigator with [Direct Action Everywhere](#) (DxE), was convicted of felony conspiracy and three misdemeanors. She will be sentenced on December 3 in Santa Rosa and faces up to 4.5 years of incarceration. She is represented by Chris Carraway, Staff Attorney at the [Animal Activist Legal Defense Project](#) (AALDP), and attorney [Kevin Little](#).

Petaluma Poultry is owned by Perdue Foods, one of the country's largest poultry producers. Ms. Rosenberg's [open rescue](#), footage of which was published online immediately after it happened, was prompted by years of investigations exposing routine [violations](#) of California's animal cruelty laws at Petaluma Poultry factory farms in Sonoma County, including birds collapsed on the floor or stuck on their backs and unable to access food or water. In 2018, Sonoma County Animal Services [referred](#) a Petaluma Poultry factory farm to the Sheriff as a suspect for criminal animal cruelty, after examining birds from the farm and finding that they were emaciated, bruised, unable to walk, and had necrotic wounds so deep that muscle and bone were exposed. The factory farm was never prosecuted. At trial, the court severely limited what the jury was able to know about these prior findings at Petaluma Poultry, despite the fact that those findings heavily influenced Ms. Rosenberg's belief that rescue was necessary.

The rescued chickens, whom Ms. Rosenberg named Poppy, Ivy, Aster, and Azalea, are alive and well at a sanctuary for rescued farmed animals.

Investigators with [Direct Action Everywhere \(DxE\)](#) enter farms, slaughterhouses, and other facilities to document abuses and rescue sick and injured animals. DxE's investigatory work has been featured in [The New York Times](#), [WIRED](#), and [Vox](#). DxE activists have been [subjected to FBI raids](#) and [felony prosecutions](#) for their investigative work. In 2022, DxE activists won the first-ever [acquittal](#) in an open rescue case. Visit DxE on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and at [directactioneverywhere.com](#).

The [Animal Activist Legal Defense Project](#) at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law works to empower and defend animal advocates through activist defense, affirmative litigation, and training law students to join and transform the field of Animal Law. Learn more at [AALDP.com](#) and follow us at @AALDP_DU on [Twitter/X](#), [Instagram](#), and @AALDP-DU on [Bluesky](#).

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