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In 2004, Hurricane Wilma ravaged Cancun, Mexico hotels and shops, including Pepe's Restaurant. When restaurant owner Gil Jose Juarez (Pepe) fled, he left his exotic wild cats trapped in the rubble.

Pepe lacked resources to rebuild and tend to the animals he'd once showcased for diners. But rather than secure humane sanctuary for them, he let the animals escape, die or rot in concrete and steel enclosures.

I respectfully ask you to release Pepe's remaining tigers to The Wild Animal Sanctuary (TWAS) — a longstanding refuge for captive lions, tigers, bears, and wolves that rehabilitates wild animals so they may live naturally on 320 acres of Colorado grasslands.

I understand TWAS, in partnership with Mexican animal welfare group Gente Por La Defensa Animal and California-based Last Chance For Animals, had initiated a relocation plan after Mexican wildlife agency PROFEPA rescinded Juarez's wildlife permits.

But the rescue mission never happened. Instead, PROFEPA wants to truck the tigers cross-country to temporary holding facilities near Mexico City until any legal actions are resolved. These already abused tigers do not need a road trip that could lead to more ill health or trauma. Moreover, they could languish in cages for months, or even years, during legal dealings.

One female tiger reportedly cannot walk without lugging her limp rear legs. The animals have subsisted on contaminated water and food scraps inside 12-foot cages layered in their own feces. They've been denied veterinary treatment. Yet despite negotiations that began in 2008, Mexican authorities still will not okay their transfer to TWAS.

Don't let animal suffering mar the image of Cancun as a famously beautiful resort destination. I hope you'll make the compassionate and reasonable decision to let these tigers live in natural habitats, with proper nutrition and veterinary care, at The Wild Animal Sanctuary.

Thank you,