

**To: Ambassador Anke Konrad,**

Embassy of Germany Belgrade, [info@belg.diplo.de](mailto:info@belg.diplo.de)

**Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz**

Office of the Federal Government, [poststelle@bundesregierung.de-mail.de](mailto:poststelle@bundesregierung.de-mail.de)

**Minister Nancy Faeser**

Ministry of the Interior, [poststelle@bmi.bund.de](mailto:poststelle@bmi.bund.de)

**President Frank-Walter Steinmeier,**

Office of the Federal President, [bundespraesidialamt@bpra.bund.de](mailto:bundespraesidialamt@bpra.bund.de)

**CC: Ambassador Emanuele Giaufret,**

Delegation of the EU Belgrade, [emanuele.giaufret@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:emanuele.giaufret@eeas.europa.eu)

15 January 2022

**Re: The treatment of environmental activists in Lutzerath**

Dear Ambassador Konrad, Chancellor Scholz, President Steinmeier and Minister Faeser,

We are 24 civil society groups; activists, experts, local landowners and organizers who participated in and organized the environmental protests in Serbia from 2020 to 2022<sup>1</sup>. We have [blocked highways](#), [camped out in winter](#) and some are [still camping now](#), in order to bring about social change and legislative reform which protects the sovereignty of the land we live on, the rights of people and the environment. We write with deep concern about the treatment we have witnessed towards activists in Lutzerath by German police,<sup>2</sup> and specifically the fact that unarmed protestors are being asked to “show restraint” while being physically handled and threatened by armed government employees.<sup>3</sup>

We write to ask for justice for the activists who are so courageously protecting your environment. We seek that you look upon them not as enemies to development but as custodians of preservation, protecting the world we live in and the land that feeds us. The removal of protesters and defense of the Garzweiler surface mine has a direct effect on shifting the planet above 1.5 degrees Celsius and breaches the internationally recognised Paris Agreement. We hope that your leadership will take this problem as seriously as the protesters have been taking it for two years.

The signatories to this letter have experienced [brutality from authorities](#). Some of us have been [beaten](#), some [served by drones](#), some [arrested](#), [threatened](#), fined or [taken to court](#). It is deeply disturbing to see similar treatment in an EU member country, not specifically because we expect better standards from an EU government, but because Serbia is on an accession path to the EU, which means that it is being judged by the standards your government is implementing right now. Given what is happening in Lutzerath, the barometer seems shockingly low. What you are imposing shows

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/05/rio-tinto-lithium-mine-thousands-of-protesters-block-roads-across-serbia>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/10/climate-activists-prepared-risk-lives-stop-german-coalmine-lutzerath>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/german-police-drag-away-activists-protesting-coal-mine-expansion-2023-01-10/>  
- <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-police-coal-protesters-face-off-in-lutzerath/a-64332434>

that it is acceptable, even lawful, for police to target peaceful environmental protests and climate activists, while protecting the interests of extractivists. It has even given cause to our own autocratic president to sarcastically gloat (and lie) about how he treats us better than your government treats its protesters.<sup>4</sup> We are not interested in a competition of who has better or worse anti-democratic standards. We are interested in the upholding human and environmental rights and climate justice.

In December 2021 EU parliament filed a [JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on environmental protests in Serbia](#) in which many German parliamentarians participated. The resolution, which refers to the demonstrations we were part of from 2021 *"strongly condemns any violation of the fundamental right to peaceful assembly;"* and *"stresses that freedom of assembly is a human right."* In this motion they called on "EU and the Serbian authorities to follow up on the legitimate concerns expressed in the environmental protests and to urgently address these problems during the [EU accession] negotiations."<sup>5</sup>

We ask for Germany, as an EU member, to uphold these standards in its own country, otherwise European countries and civil society members will be at risk.

We wish to express our solidarity with the activists on the ground who, like us, are "prepared to risk lives<sup>6</sup>" in order to protect the land. We hope that you as leaders can recognise the level of patriotism and humanity in this kind of commitment in the environmental movement today. Solutions to the problem of our environment lie in courageous leadership. A leadership with the courage to stand with people and nature while standing up to private wealth, corporate rule, overproduction, private investment and profit systems (including military) that are destroying the precious, irreplaceable environment we are part of. Whether we are fighting lignite, cobalt or lithium mines, solutions lie in saving the planet, not the industries that are destroying it. They lie in preserving green spaces and in treasuring the lives of those who dare to challenge authority. Those are the very people who, if you honor their kindness and patriotism, will make you better leaders. We ask that you look to them for courage, and act now.

Yours sincerely,



Bojana Novakovic, on behalf of  
**Marš sa Drine**



Milica Damnjanović Zanrvort, on behalf of  
**Extinction Rebellion Serbia**



Andjela Radun, on behalf of  
**Fridays for Future, Serbia**

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sd.rs/vesti/info/aleksandar-vucic-instagram-nemacka-demokratija-2023-01-11>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2021-0600\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2021-0600_EN.html)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/10/climate-activists-prepared-risk-lives-stop-german-coalmine-lutzerath>



Marina Pavlič, on behalf of  
**Kreni-Promeni**



Bojan Simišić, on behalf of  
**Eko Straža**



Iva Marković and Žaklina Živković, on behalf of  
**Pravo na vodu (Right to Water)**



Miran Pogačar and Brajan Brković, on behalf of  
**Šodroš survivor kamp, Novi Sad**



**Savez Ekoloških Organizacija Srbije - SEOS**  
(Association of Ecological Organizations Serbia)



i. Ljiljana Bralović - **Suvoborska Greda**



ii. Zlatko Kokanović - **Ne damo Jadar**



iii. Ilijana Čutura - **Eko Brigada Jagodina**



iv. Dragan Simović - **Zaštitimo Dobrinju i okolinu**



v. Milena Orubović Djukić - **Za čist Kosjerić**

ЛИТИЈУМ У ЛЕВЧУ - НЕ!



vi. Marica Živanović Poljo - **Neko brine za Levač**



Vesna Jakovljević, on behalf of  
**Organizacija OSNA and Čuvari Prirode, Novi Sad**



Aleksandar Kulić, on behalf of  
**Borani se Pitaju, Bor**



Vladimir Božić, on behalf of  
**Ne dam, Nu dau, Majdanpek**



Dragana Arsić, on behalf of  
**Pokret Odbranimo šume Fruške gore and  
Udruženje za zaštitu šuma, Novi Sad**



Gordana Jelisavčić on behalf of  
**Marš s Kolubare**



Alija Madzović, on behalf of  
**Menjamo Novi Pazar**



Saša Mladenović, on behalf of  
**Bitka Za Vlasinu** (Battle for Vlasina)



Igor Velić, on behalf of  
**Sigurne Staze, Bor**



Zoran Bukvić, on behalf of  
**Ulice za bicikliste**