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MEDIA STATEMENT: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Civil society groups to German authorities: *Listen to the activists in Lutzerath, they will make you better leaders.*

24 civil society groups from Serbia sent an open letter to German authorities this morning, asking for justice for environmental activists in Lutzerath¹ and encouraging German politicians to look at the situation as an opportunity to make them better leaders.

Raising concerns about unarmed protestors being met with armed police forces,² the letter asks for ***"justice for the activists who are so courageously protecting your environment... We, like them, are "prepared to risk lives"³ 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, 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."***

Signatories to the letter include activists, experts, local landowners and organizers who participated in and organized the environmental protests in Serbia from 2020 to 2022⁴, and who themselves have experienced [brutality from authorities](#), been [beaten](#) by police, [serveiled by drones](#), [arrested](#), [threatened](#), fined or [taken to court](#). They add that the situation in Lutzerath has ***given cause to our own autocratic president (Aleksandar Vučić) to sarcastically gloat and lie that he treats us better than your government treats its protesters.***⁵ They ask for Germany to uphold the standards that the EU expect from Serbia on its accession path, and those listed in the EU [JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on environmental protests in Serbia](#).⁶ They mention that if Germany does not uphold these standards ***in their own country, European countries and civil society members will be at risk.***

For the full letter and the full list of signatories [click here](#)

For questions contact Bojana Novakovic at bojana@marssadrine.org

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/10/climate-activists-prepared-risk-lives-stop-german-coalmine-lutzerath>

² <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-l%C3%BCtzerath/a-64332434>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/10/climate-activists-prepared-risk-lives-stop-german-coalmine-lutzerath>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/05/rio-tinto-lithium-mine-thousands-of-protesters-block-roads-across-serbia>

⁵ <https://www.sd.rs/vesti/info/aleksandar-vucic-instagram-nemacka-demokratija-2023-01-11>

⁶ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2021-0600_EN.html