



Open signatory letter condemning the clear-cutting of the Hambacher Forest

Dear Dr. Rolf Martin Schmitz, CEO of RWE AG and Ministerpräsidentin Hannelore Kraft,

For more than 12,000 years the Hambacher forest has stood in North West Germany. It is home to iconic and endangered species, such as the iconic Lily of the Valley, the Agile Frog and the Dormouse, which are protected by the EU Habitats Directive to conserve rare, threatened or endemic animal and plant species. So far, 142 species important for conservation have been identified in Hambacher, a forest of exceptional beauty and European importance which has been enjoyed by the local community for generations.

As organisations working to protect forests, we are outraged to learn that the remaining fragment of this forest is being clear-cut by RWE, Germany's second largest electricity provider, to make way for an extension of an open-cast lignite coal mine. As 80 per cent of the forest has been destroyed since the 1970s, the remaining fragment is more precious than ever. Losing it would be an unmitigated disaster for European biodiversity as well as for the local community, who will lose this precious ecosystem forever.

This destruction is also causing a double problem for the climate. As Germany recognises with its considerable forest protection funds, forests' role in sequestering carbon dioxide and storing carbon is critical in fighting climate change. Deforestation not only releases the carbon stored in the trees and soil, it also allows access to the resources underneath - in this case the most polluting fossil fuel that exists, brown coal.

We, the undersigned organisations, condemn the clear-cutting of this beautiful and ancient forest of European importance and demand an end to all activities that harm the forest and its inhabitants.

Signatory organisations:

Fern, Belgium
Friends of the Earth Europe
Greenpeace Germany
Finance & Trade Watch, Austria
Biofuelwatch, UK
denkhausbremen, Germany

Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust, UK
ARA, Germany
BankTrack, Netherlands
CEEweb for Biodiversity, Hungary
Corporate Europe Observatory, Belgium/Europe
Bruno Manser Fund, Switzerland
Pro Natura - Friends of the Earth Switzerland
Pro REGENWALD, Deutschland
Rainforest Relief, USA
Tropenbos Ghana Programme, Ghana
Latvian Ornithological Society, Latvia
Coal Action Network - UK
This Changes Everything UK
Salva la Selva, Spain
Rettet den Regenwald e.V., Germany
Civic Response, Ghana
Forest Watch Ghana
Kasa Initiative Ghana
Gaia Care, Ghana
Amazon Watch, USA
Hnutí DUHA - Friends of the Earth Czech Republic
Centar za životnu sredinu, Friends of the Earth Bosnia and Herzegovina
Regenwald-Institut e.V., Germany
Forum Ökologie & Papier, Germany
Woodland League, Ireland
Naturvernforbundet - Friends of the Earth Norway
LAMMP , UK
Pro Wildlife, Germany
System Change, not Climate Change!, Austria
Friends of the Earth England Wales and Northern Ireland