

Fuente: Initiative to Keep Hasankeyf Alive. 13 de octubre de 2009

20.000 demonstrated against dams in Dersim on Munzur River

- biggest environmental demonstration in Turkey -



20.000 people demonstrated in the city of Dersim (turkish: Tunceli) against dams in the Dersim province.

The protest in the kurdisch province Dersim was caused by the recent flooding (it started on 18th August 2009) through the 100 m high Uzuncayir dam on the Munzur River what created a 20 km long lake up to the city. It was not only the biggest anti dam demonstration in Turkey, it was also the biggest demonstration about an environmental issue in the country.

This demonstration was initiated and organized by totally 37 Dersim related organizations, including the municipality of Dersim, environmental/anti-dam groups, the unions, human rights, social and women civil organizations and political parties. On a distance of 5 km the people marched under the common banner "We do not want dams in Dersim". They marched also to the artificial lake where they criticized the turkish state for its destructive and ignorant policy. The major said that the dams destroy the right of life for the people in this province and that they will resist against that policy. Other speakers emphasized that the Munzur river and valley is the center of the whole life in the province for human and animals, it is the basis for the economy, social life and culture.

When the police wanted to control everybody who wanted to enter the meeting area, the people protested that and the police had to step back. At the final meeting the speakers (also the oppositional deputy Seraffetin Halis and artists) criticized that the state gives no information about the planned projects to the public and called for a coalition independently from the political view against the dams.

Members of other anti-dam movements in Turkey like Hasankeyf, Alliano, Firtina Valley (Black Sea region) participated also in the demonstration.

This is a very important symbol for unifying the forces against the destructive water and dam policy of the Turkey.

Background:

In the province of Dersim totally 18 dams and hydroelectric power plants

(HEPP) are planned of which two are realized. Due to the huge negative impacts of the dams the population is against these projects. So for at least nine years there are anti dam campaigns in Dersim und the big western cities like Istanbul.

The dams and HEPPs would destroy the 42.000 ha Munzur Nationalpark, one of the biggest in Turkey, which has a very high biodiversity. There are determined 1518 species of them 227 species are endemic for Turkey and 43 for the province Dersim. The Dersim region is the most afforested kurdish province and limitedly influenced by human. Dersim is also the only province with an Alevi (a specific belief in Turkey) majority which like the kurdish identity is not accepted by the state. In the 90ies during the dirty war of the state almost half of the villages were destroyed by the Turkish army. So the population has been reduced forcely from 155.000 to 80.000.

The dams would displace several thousand people, but the most part of the population would be affected negatively due to the widespread expected impacts. For example the dam reservoir will be a serious healthy threat for the population of the city Dersim where live 30.000 people. Also many important roads would be cut. Finally the economy would be destroyed completely and the people would leave the province.