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PRESS RELEASE

**A beautiful seaside resort in Turkey is under siege by industrial wind energy projects being built illegally with no public consultation and at huge cost to the environment. The wind turbines are being supplied by Nordex and Vestas, eager to cash-in on Turkey's burgeoning renewable energy market, no matter what the price.**

Sandy coves, crystal clear turquoise waters, harbours filled with brightly painted fishing boats - the picturesque town of Çeşme on the Turkish Aegean coast is a popular tourist resort that attracts close to half a million holidaymakers each year. A magnet for windsurfers from across Europe, due to the shallow, calm waters and consistent breeze. It hosts the PWA Windsurf World Championships each summer. But windsurfers are not the only ones attracted by the area's wind...

In January 2014, five Turkish companies unveiled plans for a series of wind energy projects ringing Çeşme with over 60 turbines, each towering up to 140 metres high. The announcement shocked the local community, which knew nothing of the plans. Research by local campaigners subsequently revealed that an initial agreement between the Turkish energy regulator, EMRA, and the firms had been signed in 2001.

"Despite a planning period of 14 years, the people of Çeşme were never once consulted about these wind energy projects," explains Çeşme Municipal Councillor Esen FK Whiting, who is spokeswoman for Çeşme Sürdülenebilir Yaşam Platformu ( [www.cesmeplatformu.org](http://www.cesmeplatformu.org) ), a local NGO leading the campaign against the wind energy developments.

"Çeşme is a tourist town and people come here to relax and enjoy the beautiful nature, beaches and views. These projects will have a very bad affect on the environment, the tourist industry and the local economy as well as its well-being of its residents. Some of the turbines will be sited less than 300 metres from residential neighbourhoods and even a school, subjecting local people to the negative health affects linked to wind turbines."

In Turkey energy projects must legally be preceded by an environmental impact assessment. But the projects surrounding Çeşme were granted an exemption by the Turkish Ministry of Environment & Urbanisation on the grounds that each project has a generation capacity below 20 MW. However, the cumulative affect of the 5 proposed projects, which have a combined capacity of over 100 MW, in such a small area clearly warrants an environmental impact assessment.

All five energy projects are also sited in 1st Degree Nature Conservation Areas that should enjoy the highest level of official protection. Construction of the first project by Turkish company ABK Çeşme RES AŞ, which started work illegally in January 2014, has already caused irreparable environmental damage in the hills above the town.

"Ancient olive groves have been flattened and rare, officially protected species, such as mastic trees and salep orchids, have been destroyed," says Dr Alev Caglar, a local resident and environmentalist. "This kind of construction in an official Nature Protection Area is completely illegal. We have made complaints but the authorities do absolutely nothing. I have also lodged an international complaint under the Berne Convention."

The official land confiscation process for the ABK project started in January 2014 with compulsory purchase orders issued to affected private landowners. Subject to a legal challenge by a number of landowners, the process has yet to be completed. But this hasn't stopped ABK from illegally occupying the private land to start construction.

The legal basis for the confiscation of private land under “emergency nationalisation” legislation has also been successfully challenged in the Turkish Council of State, the country’s highest administrative court. But despite four rulings ordering the energy company to stop construction, the work continues. Countless complaints to local authorities by landowners and campaigners have fallen on deaf ears.

The newly elected mayor of Çeşme Muhittin Dalgıç is supporting the campaign against the wind energy projects, stating that the placement of wind turbines so close to residential areas is unwise, and that green energy generation should be in areas where it has no detrimental effect on either the people or the natural environment. However, without support for the campaign at the higher levels of government in Ankara, there is a real danger that Çeşme as it is today will cease to exist.

Municipal councillor Whiting comments: “There are over 20 ongoing court cases in local, regional and national courts concerning the ABK project. We have made many petitions but local officials and law enforcement agencies do nothing to investigate or enforce the court decisions.”

Unfortunately, this kind of situation is not unusual in Turkey, where environmental legislation is frequently ignored and laws are not enforced due to commercial or political pressure. However, European companies such as Nordex, which is supplying the ABK project in Çeşme with both the turbines and the service contract, have an obligation to meet the environmental standards set out in the Aarhus Treaty and the *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*.

The OECD guidelines state that multinational enterprises have an obligation, “*to assess, and address in decision-making, the foreseeable environmental, health, and safety-related impacts associated with the processes, goods and services.*”

Furthermore, “*Where these proposed activities may have significant environmental, health, or safety impacts, and where they are subject to a decision of a competent authority, prepare an appropriate environmental impact assessment.*”

Clearly, Nordex has not lived up to these responsibilities or has been misled by the operating companies with regard to the projects in Çeşme, which have serious environmental, economic and public health implications and which were preceded by no public consultation or environmental impact assessment. The German company is now the subject of a complaint to the OECD by the campaigners.

“Responsible international firms like Nordex should not be involved in unethical, undemocratic and illegal projects like the ABK Çeşme RES AŞ project. We have tried to engage with the company but they have not responded. This leads us to the unhappy conclusion that they are putting profits before any other concerns in their pursuit of deals in Turkey.”

**Please support the campaign to save Çeşme from illegal industrial wind energy projects by adding your signature to the online petition at [www.Change.org](http://www.Change.org)**

**Save Çeşme now by signing online: [http://chn.ge/1qS1jz9?share\\_id=rXZoeVSSgv](http://chn.ge/1qS1jz9?share_id=rXZoeVSSgv)**

**For additional information contact  
Çeşme Sürdürülebilir Yaşam Platformu  
+90 (0)532 668 7338  
[www.cesmeplatformu.org](http://www.cesmeplatformu.org)**