

The Tigris Declaration To Save Hasankeyf and Mesopotamian Marshes

We are the people of Mesopotamia, one of the most remarkable areas of the world, known as the cradle of civilization. We are the people of Hasankeyf in Turkey and of the Marshes in Iraq. We are connected and combined by the Tigris river. The Tigris is our common root, our common lifeline and our common future.



Hasankeyf



Ahmet Ozyurt

Mesopotamian Marshes

Agata Skowronek

Nature does not recognize political boundaries. The Tigris passes the ancient city of Hasankeyf and creates further downstream one of the most remarkable wetland on earth. What ever you do in the upstream of a river does effect the downstream. The floodwaters that feed the Mesopotamian marshes in spring come from the Turkish mountains.

Now, regrettably, the Ilisu dam may destroy this connection. Our future, our cultural heritage, the ecosystems we live in, everything what we have in common is threatened by the Ilisu dam project in Turkey.

If Ilisu dam is completed it will have severe impacts **upstream** the dam. Hasankeyf would drown in the reservoir, about 65.000 people would lose their homes and goods and 400 kilometres of intact river ecosystems would be destroyed with hundreds of threatened species.

Yet the impact **downstream** the dam is no less severe. Ilisu would lead to a dramatic reduction of water and sediment quantity, especially in spring. The remaining water that flows into Iraq would no longer sustain the unique forms of life in the Mesopotamian Marshes. The situation will even get worse when the proposed Cizre dam is constructed and agricultural drainage water is fed back into the Tigris.

In Iraq about 6 Million people depend on the Tigris river. They fish, they irrigate their fields etc. Ilisu dam would therefore increase poverty among these people. It might cause a humanitarian disaster.

The effects on the Mesopotamian Marshes, one of the most important ecosystems worldwide, will be irreversible. The areas that have been restored successfully after

2004 would turn into desert again. This would also make any further restorations of the marshes impossible.

In all the years of discussion and negotiations about the Ilisu dam project, the downstream effects were largely ignored, never seriously assessed and discussed. However, we want to avoid the fate of the Euphrates: due to dams and irrigation projects in Turkey and Syria, the water level in Iraq has decreased dramatically. The water has become saline and is barely usable.

We therefore call Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the UNEP (United Nation Environmental Program) to

- Seriously assess the effects of the Ilisu Dam project and especially the impacts on the Mesopotamian Marshes, undertaking all necessary international interventions
- Call the Turkish Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdogan to reconsider the Ilisu dam project to save Hasankeyf and the Mesopotamian Marshes.
- Urge the governments of Turkey and Iraq to act on the UN convention on non-navigable uses of international watercourses (UN Watercourses Convention) and other related UN conventions
- Use the Rio+20 conference to campaign against worldwide financial and political support for large dams.

The Ilisu dam project is threatening our lives, our culture and our livelihoods, the world we live in. We therefore kindly demand your support.

Signatures