



SECCIÓN SINDICAL DE LA
CONSEJERÍA DE MEDIO AMBIENTE Y
ORDENACIÓN DEL TERRITORIO



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FOREST RANGERS DEMAND THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE ACT 3/2007 THAT WILL LEAVE UNGUARDED 74% OF THE REGION

The recently approved law will increase the risk of desertification in the region of Madrid, which hosts the COP 8 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

The Region of Madrid covers 8.000 square meters. With a population of 6 million inhabitants, and massively overbuilt, this region is still home to endangered species such as the Spanish Imperial Eagle (*Aquila Adalberti*) or the Iberian Lynx (*Linx pardina*), and it takes in 7 Sites included in the Natura 2000 Network under the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. These protected sites cover 40 per cent of the region.

Almost one third of the territory of the region of Madrid is under desertification process or facing risk of desertification, mainly due to forest fires, unsustainable use of natural resources, and massive housing developments.

Forest environmental protection is mainly carried out by the Forest Rangers, the Regional Environmental Police and also the largest task force of its kind with 250 agents with full enforcement powers. Stopping desertification in the region depends on a great extent on their work. Their functions include enforcement, surveillance, control and participation in the elimination of forest fires, as well in the investigation of their causes. 85% of all fire investigations is carried out by these agents.

Their job proves very effective. They report 80% of environmental offenses in the region according to the Environment Public Prosecutor at the Supreme Court of Justice of Madrid.

On July 25th, the Regional Government of Madrid approved the "Law 3/2007 of Urgent Measures for the Modernization of Government and Management bodies". This law restricts to Foresters the access to forests and private lands without a warrant which prevents them from doing their job in the surveillance and control of illegal activities and environmental offenses in 75% of the territory which is private owned. This will make fire prevention and control of illegal activities such as logging, building next to impossible. Other illegal actions that accelerate the desertification process as the unrestricted circulation of vehicles, illegal derivation of water, the use of poisoning chemicals, poaching, unlawful hunting and fishing might widespread with such a law.

The Government of the Region of Madrid did not mention these facts at the opening of the COP 8 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Its official line is that the basis of its policy to combat desertification is to plant 15 million trees until 2010.

The Forest Rangers in Madrid want to announce to the International Community met at the COP 8 these facts and express their concern about the current lack of environmental protection in the this region that hosts of the COP 8, they will also continue their struggle, with demonstrations and legal actions against the Law 3/2007, demanding its withdrawal.

The Forest Rangers also want to thank for the support received from the Spanish Government, particularly from the Ministry of Environment, which has announced an appeal against this law at the Constitutional Court of Spain. They are also grateful for the support provided by the trade unions, environmental groups and NGOs, professionals, Official Associations, political parties, and the citizens.