

A Selection of Environmental News from Turkey

Polen Ekoloji Bulletin

August 2025

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At A Glance: Ecological Developments in August

August 2025 saw intensifying environmental pressures across Turkey. Mining and energy projects expanded rapidly, often overriding legal and ecological safeguards, while droughts, wildfires, and water scarcity highlighted the growing impacts of climate change.

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On the Ground: A Selection of News

Across Turkey, new mines, energy plants, and water projects escalated environmental harm, triggering protests and court battles as forests, rivers, and farmland face unprecedented threats.

I.

At A Glance: Ecological Developments in August

Mining Activities

August saw a surge in mining-related conflicts across Turkey, marked by legal disputes, ecological damage, and expanding corporate activity.

- **Illegal operations & legal victories:** Despite being sealed by authorities, a concrete plant in [Malatya \(Battalgazi\)](#) continued operations. In [Muğla \(Akbelen\)](#), villagers won a partial legal victory as the Council of State overturned a lower court decision against their anti-mining case.
- **Expanding mining threats:** Communities in [Bolu \(Mengen\)](#), [Bursa \(Gürsu\)](#), and [Giresun \(Bulancak\)](#) resisted projects granted “no EIA required” status, threatening thousands of hectares of forests, farmland, and findik orchards. In [Çanakkale \(Serçiler\)](#), experts warned that Koza Gold’s proposed mine near Atikhisar Dam would inflict environmental damage valued at over \$100 million.
- **Water crises linked to mining:** The Kışladağ Gold Mine in [Uşak](#) was tied to severe water shortages, forcing restrictions on municipal supply. In [Diyarbakır \(Licê\)](#), a copper mine in a landslide-prone zone was found to be depleting local water sources, while in [Şırnak \(Gabar\)](#), TPAO’s oil extraction left more than 3,000 villagers without clean water.
- **Corporate expansion:** Multinational and domestic companies, including [TransAtlantic Petroleum](#), Tüprağ (Eldorado Gold), Centerra, and Cengiz Holding, advanced new projects. [The government accelerated licensing](#), approving over 225 mining, oil, and gas exploration permits in just two months.
- **Toxic pollution & local resistance:** Cases of waste dumping in [Kastamonu \(Hanönü\)](#) and a planned copper mine in [Sinop \(Boyabat\)](#) sparked strong backlash over risks to forests, agriculture, and drinking water. Villagers in [Sivas \(Zara\)](#) marched against a strontium mine threatening their only water source and cultural sites.



Akbelen villagers protesting against gold mining

Energy Projects

- **Geothermal:** [Aksaray](#) auctioned 11 geothermal exploration zones to private companies. In [Bingöl \(Peri Valley\)](#), villagers resisted Kurban Madencilik’s geothermal drilling, warning of threats to water, agriculture, beekeeping, and biodiversity. In [Manisa \(Salihli\)](#), Sanko Enerji pushed forward a geothermal project in vineyards, using an outdated 2018 EIA exemption, later granted a full “EIA Positive” decision despite local concerns.
- **Solar:** In [İzmir \(Çeşme\)](#), residents opposed Enerjisa’s plan to install 18,000+ panels on farmland within a protected area, continuing resistance against Sabancı Holding’s earlier wind-solar hybrid projects.
- **Nuclear:** In [Sinop](#), public opposition intensified after a second expert report backed the controversial ATMEA-1 reactor design, overlooking 300 earlier EIA violations and failing to address nuclear waste and dependency risks.

Climate Crisis: Wildfires and Drought

- **Drought:** Severe water shortages spread across multiple regions. Projects like [the Dalaman–Aydın water transfer](#) drew criticism for high costs and ecological risks, while rivers and streams such as [Teke Deresi \(Kırklareli\)](#) and many sources in [Şirnak](#) ran dry. [Beyşehir Lake](#) receded by 1.5 km, and [Hamzabey Dam \(Elazığ\)](#)—expected to supply water until 2040—completely dried up within seven years.
- **Wildfires:** In the first seven months, [4,426 fires destroyed ~50,000 hectares](#), with many burned areas quickly opened to new mining projects under the July “Super Permit Law.” Major blazes hit [Bursa \(Katır Dağları, 3,000 ha\)](#), [Karabük \(90 ha\)](#), [Mersin \(Silifke, 6 villages evacuated\)](#), and [Çanakkale \(Gelibolu, 6 villages evacuated\)](#). Fires spread across borders ([Antakya from Syria’s Latakia](#)) and claimed lives, including a volunteer in [Osmaniye](#).

Environmental Degradation

August saw mounting ecological destruction: microplastics were detected in high-altitude glacial lakes of [the Kaçkar and Keşiş Mountains](#), while rivers, lakes, and coasts from [Antalya](#) to [Balıkesir](#) and [İzmir](#) suffered mass fish deaths linked to pollution and falling water levels. In [Mardin](#) and [Şirnak](#), residents denounced waste discharge, ecotourism-linked land grabs, and continued deforestation in [Gabar and Bertül Valley](#). Meanwhile, [Gerenlik Bay \(Antalya\)](#) faced reauction despite its protected status. At [the national scale](#), large-scale eminent domain decisions fast-tracked new energy projects, and nearly 1 million m² of forest in Samsun, Zonguldak, and Istanbul lost protected status—part of a broader legal framework accelerating deforestation and land conversion.



II. On the Ground: A Selection of News

The monthly Polen Ekoloji Bulletin in English comprises a selection of news on environmental destruction and environmentalist resistance from the more comprehensive monthly bulletin in Turkish. Both bulletins are available [here](#).

01.08.2025

Double Threat to Nature: Wildfires on the One Side, Mining on the Other

[Mezopotamya Ajansı](#)

According to data released by the General Directorate of Forestry on July 30, a total of 4,426 forest fires occurred in the first seven months of 2025, damaging 49,769 hectares of forest land. The number of fires and the area affected have already surpassed those of 2024. Meanwhile, within the past month alone, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approvals were granted for 84 Group IV mines. Between July 1 and July 31, EIA decisions were issued for 84 Group IV mining sites (including gold, silver, iron, copper, zinc, and chromium), some of which are located in provinces that lost their forests to the fires.

04.08.2025

Turned to Ashes with Wildfires, Became Barren with Mining: Gürsu Plains Carved by the Hands of the City

Bursa

[Evrensel](#)

With a new “No EIA Required” decision issued in October 2024, 116.75 hectares of forest land out of a total of 155.1 hectares in Dışkaya were opened to quarry operations following six separate EIA processes. Villagers who rely on the Gürsu Plain for their livelihoods challenged the “No EIA Required” ruling in court. Based on the expert report, the judiciary annulled the October 8, 2024, decision, finding it unlawful.

06.08.2025

Approval for Drilling on Hazelnut Gardens

Giresun

[Mezopotamya Ajansı](#)

In the Bulancak district, a “No EIA Required” decision was issued, allowing two companies to conduct mineral exploration drilling at seven different sites, including areas that contain forests, farmland, and hazelnut orchards.

07.08.2025

Millions of Dollars Worth Public Loss Expected Due to Mining in Serçiler by Koza Gold Çanakkale

[Evrensel](#)

Protests continue against the gold mine that Koza Gold Operations seeks to establish within the protected zone of the Atikhisar Dam, the sole drinking water source for Çanakkale. Özdilek pointed out that in the early 2000s, 54% of Çanakkale’s total area was covered by forests, but due to numerous mines, forest fires, and wind energy projects, the province’s forest cover has dropped to around 34%.



Protest against the reauction of Gerenlik Bay in Antalya

10.08.2025

Meltdown Continues at Ağrı Mountain Peak Glacier

Ağrı

[Evensel](#)

The “summit glacier” covering the peak of Mount Ararat, the highest point in Türkiye, is projected to lose nearly half its mass by 2050 due to global warming and rising temperatures. In the early 1900s, the glacier spanned 15 square kilometers, but today it has shrunk to just 4.5 to 5 square kilometers.

Licik Village Resists Geothermal Project in Çewlig

Bingöl

[Mezopotamya Ajansı](#)

Residents of Licik village in Bingöl’s Kanîreş (Karlıova) district are protesting geothermal drilling that began without their consent after authorities issued a “no EIA needed” report. Villagers warn the project threatens the rich ecosystem of the Peri Valley, local agriculture, and traditional livelihoods, and could force them into displacement once again, as in the 1990s. They have launched legal action and called on the public to support their struggle to stop the project.

12.08.2025

Public Cancelled It, State Did Not Give Up

Antalya

[BirGün](#)

Gerenlik Bay, located in the Yalı area of Yeşilköy neighborhood in Kaş, Antalya, an area designated both as a 1st Degree Natural Protected Site and a Special Environmental Protection Zone that also encompasses the ancient city of Patara, is once again being put up for tender. Despite the cancellation of the previous tender only about five months ago, it was announced that 77,700 square meters of forest land will be re-tendered in April by the Kaş Forestry Directorate under the name “Gelemiş Non-Residential Forest Park.”



Deforestation in Çanakkale, Şahinli region (2013-2024)

12.08.2025

Legal Victory for Akbelen Resistance: State Council Reversed Judgement of Local Court
Muğla

[BirGün](#)

In the lawsuit against mining activities in Akbelen Forest, the Council of State annulled the local court's decision, citing "insufficient examination." The villagers declared they will continue their struggle, stating: "Our land is not for sale."

16.08.2025

Same City, Same Project, Different Reports
Sinop

[BirGün](#)

The second expert report on the Sinop Nuclear Power Plant dismissed the 300 findings identified in the previous report. The report, which approved the ATMEA-1 reactor, unprecedented anywhere in the world, drew criticism from the people of Sinop.

16.07.2025

Mountains resisted, jurisdiction cancelled
Aydın

[BirGün](#)

The State Council annulled the "Environmental Impact Assessment not needed" decision for the feldspar mining project of Dinçler Mining company. Advocates for life have won!

17.08.2025

The law passed, the plunder accelerated: Second collective "emergency expropriation" decision in 10 days

Ankara

[Sendika.Org](#)

With a presidential decree published in the Official Gazette, collective "urgent expropriations" were carried out for the second time within 10 days in 19 different areas for energy lines, transformer stations, organised industrial zones, renewable energy, and irrigation projects. This accelerated expropriation process under the new law has sparked controversy.

20.08.2025

Parcel by Parcel Occupation by Oil Monopoly
Diyarbakır

[BirGün](#)

The US-based TransAtlantic Petroleum company is steadily expanding its area in Diyarbakır in a sustainable manner, obtaining EIA approvals parcel by parcel over transformed agricultural and irrigation lands within its 15,240-hectare license area. Among the nine separate oil exploration, extraction, and storage projects it is conducting in the Sur and Bismil districts, a positive EIA decision was granted for a 90-hectare project in Yenievler Neighborhood. The projects are located very close, just 280 meters, to the Ambar Stream and the Silvan Dam irrigation canal. Ahmet İnan, a lawyer from the Diyarbakır Bar Association's Environmental Commission, emphasises that the company conceals the total impact by evaluating the process "piece by piece," putting both health and agricultural resources at risk. It is also reported that the company could not answer the expert committee's question, "Where are the toxic liquids being disposed of?" and that no re-injection system exists. TransAtlantic has been operating in Türkiye since 2005, acquiring various fields over this period.

22.08.2025

AKP Continues to Issue Licenses to Capital
Across Turkey

[BirGün](#)

Amid a national water and food crisis, the government has accelerated the distribution of licenses to mining companies. In the past two months, 104 mining exploration permits were issued, including eight new licenses to Tüpraş Mining, which annually consumes 10% of Uşak's water supply. Centerra Mining received numerous new licenses in Samsun, Erzincan, and Aksaray. Hekimhan Mining, a subsidiary of Kolin Holding, obtained an iron exploration permit in Sinop, while Altınsoy Mining was granted a marble exploration license in Bursa. Since June 1, the Ministry of Environment has approved 255 oil, natural gas, and mining projects; the license periods for TPAO's oil exploration in Şırnak and Diyarbakır were also extended by two years.



27.08.2025

Cengiz Holding Targets Boyabat: Thousands of Trees Will Be Lost

Sinop

[Evrensel](#)

Eti Bakır A.Ş., a subsidiary of Cengiz Holding, plans to open a copper mine on approximately 898 hectares in Boyabat, Sinop, which would involve cutting down more than 51,000 trees. The rapidly initiated EIA process has drawn significant backlash due to the project's proximity to dams and agricultural lands. Local residents and experts warn that water sources could dry up, leaving over 50,000 people without water, rice farming could cease, and heavy metals like arsenic and mercury would contaminate soil and water, threatening both the ecosystem and livestock.

28.08.2025

Mining Protest in Dipsizgöl Village: Only Water Source at Risk

Sivas

[Yeni Yasam](#)

In Dipsizgöl Village, Zara district villagers protested a planned mining project, warning that it threatens the village's only water source. Residents entered the exploration area to demonstrate their opposition to the project.

29.08.2025

New Oil Drilling in Şırnak: Environmental Destruction Deepens

Şırnak

[Evrensel](#)

The new oil drilling activities carried out in Şırnak are threatening the local wildlife. Environmental organisations state that such operations harm the ecosystem and conflict with the principles of sustainable development.

30.08.2025

Nazik Lake Protected Site Under Threat from DSI Project

Bitlis

[Yeni Yasam](#)

Despite being designated a "Strictly Protected Sensitive Area," Nazik Lake in Xelat is at risk due to planned canal work by the State Hydraulic Works (DSİ). Environmental groups and locals have vowed to oppose the project.

