



Civil Society Organizations have united against air pollution

18 Civil Society Organizations that focus on health and nature conservation in Turkey and in international level established "Right to Clean Air Platform". Platform will monitor effects of coal-fired power plants on public and environmental health, and work for protection of right to clean air and right to public health.

6 October 2015, İstanbul – 18 Civil Society Organizations working on nature conservation and health established "Right to Clean Air Platform" initiative, with the aim of drawing attention to the factors that threaten public and environmental health through creating air pollution, particularly to coal-fired power plants. Right to Clean Air Platform emphasizes that in Turkey every year thousands of people die of reasons related to air pollution and stated that they will perform work on coal-fired power plants, which are one of the main reasons of this pollution.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Haluk Çalışır stated on behalf of Turkish Thoracic Society, a member organization of Right to Clean Air Platform, that "Air pollution causes harm to human health as much as smoking does. A great number of people falls ill or loses life without knowing that the true reason of their sickness is air pollution. Every year in Turkey about 29,000 people lose their lives due to air pollution, with 2,879 resulting from coal-fired power plants. The particular matters that diffuse around from coal-fired power plants can cause sickness even hundreds of kilometers away. Therefore, coal-fired power plants violate a basic human right: right to breath clean air. With the awareness that air pollution increasingly threatens public health, Turkish Thoracic Society considers the new 80 planned coal-fired power plants as a significant health hazard."

Air pollution and coal-fired power plants are behind 3.7 million premature deaths worldwide every year.

Right to Clean Air Platform underlined that particulate matters, sulphurdioxide, nitrogenoxide, heavy metals and persistent organic pollutant emissions from 22 coal-fired power plants currently under operation in Turkey are one of the main reasons of air pollution in the country.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Çağlayan, on behalf of Public Health Specialists Association, stated that, "Air pollution limits in Turkey are above the limits determined by World Health Organization... Energy policies of Turkey result in increases in air pollution due to the new planned coal-fired power plants, which are a major cause of air pollution, and threatens public health. Air pollution is today the most important issue in health agenda."

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gamze Varol, on behalf of the platform member Turkish Medical Association, stated that "This is the first time in Turkey that health and environmental organizations in the country come together in order to conduct research and perform studies on right to clean air. Air pollution that has reached critical extend appears everyday as a bigger threat to public health. Therefore, the rights-based struggle of Right to Clean Air Platform is of great importance".

Air pollution affects heart, lungs and respiratory tract and causes illnesses such as lung cancer, urinary bladder cancer, apoplexy, ischemic heart diseases, heart attacks, cardiac insufficiency, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease(COPD) and asthma. It causes children to frequently have respiratory tract infection and insufficient lung development. According to the studies conducted by World Health Organization (WHO), environmental air pollution caused 3.7 million premature deaths in 2012 and is listed as the greatest environmental health threat.

Coal-fired power plants claim more lives than traffic accidents.

According to the findings of “Silent Killer” report prepared by Greenpeace Mediterranean, in 2010, air pollution originating from coal-fired power plants in Turkey shortened human life for about 10 years. Moreover, in the same year, the fatalities resulting from air pollution originating from coal-fired power plants in Turkey were about 2 times higher than the fatalities due to traffic accidents.

According to the study of Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) “The Unpaid Health Bill” of 2015, every year in Turkey coal-fired power plants causes health expenses of 2.9 to 3.6 billion Euro. Furthermore, every year 2,879 premature deaths, 637,643 workday losses, 3,823 new chronic bronchitis cases occurs.

Coal-based electricity production is worrying.

Platform reminded that coal-based electricity production in Turkey increased by 40% between 2009 and 2012, there are currently 22 coal-fired power plants in operation, and it is defined in 2012 as national strategy to increase the share of electricity produced from coal. Platform also stated that increasing the total number of coal-fired power plants to 80 can trigger a disaster for public and environmental health. It is pointed out that, while according to “Assessment and Management of Air Quality Regulation Draft” it is aimed within Turkey's health targets to adjust air quality pollution parameters to European Union limit values until 2018, plans of coal-fired power plants and these targets are in conflict.

Coal-fired power plants on the one hand threaten human health with air pollution and create new costs. On the other hand, they step forward as the biggest reason behind climate change. In 2013, CO₂ emissions originating from energy production constituted 67.8% of climate change triggering global greenhouse gas emissions. Mitigation of air pollution originating from coal-fired power plants will also ensure struggle against climate change that threatens existence of humans and ecosystems.

ABOUT RIGHT TO CLEAN AIR PLATFORM

Right to Clean Air Platform (RCAP) was established in June 2015 when 18 Civil Society Organizations that work on nature protection and health came together.

Establishment Target: Advocating for public health, rights to clean air and environment, corresponding to air pollution and environmental problems caused primarily by coal-fired power plants in operation and under construction.

Platform members: Doctors for Environment Association (Çevre için Hekimler Derneği), Greenpeace Mediterranean, Association of Public Health Specialists (Halk Sağlığı Uzmanları Derneği-HASUDER), Association of Occupational and Professional Diseases Specialists (İş ve Meslek Hastalıkları Uzmanları Derneği-İMUD), General Practitioners Association (Pratisyen Hekimlik Derneği), Turkish Neurological Society (Türk Nöroloji Derneği), TEMA The Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats (Türkiye Erozyonla Mücadele, Ağaçlandırma ve Doğal Varlıkları Koruma Vakfı-TEMA Vakfı), Turkish Respiratory Society (Türkiye Solunum Araştırmaları Derneği-TÜSAD), Turkish Medical Association (Türk Tabipleri Birliği-TTB), Turkish Thoracic Society (Türk Toraks Derneği-TTD), Greenpeace Law Association (Yeşil Barış Hukuk Derneği), Green Thought Association (Yeşil Düşünce Derneği), Yuva Association (Yuva Derneği).

Supporting Institutions: 350.org, Climate Action Network Europe(CAN Europe), WWF-Turkey, Health and Environment Alliance(HEAL)

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