

PRESS RELEASE

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BIANCA JAGGER URGES CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL NOT TO EXTEND FINANCING TO ILISU DAM SHE IS IN HASANKEYF TO INAUGURATE A PEACE PARK AT SITE OF THREATENED CITY

Bianca Jagger, international human rights campaigner, urges the governments of Germany, Austria and Switzerland not to extend export credits to the consortium of companies involved in the construction of the controversial Ilisu dam project. Ms Jagger will join the Mayor of Hasankeyf as well as local and international human rights and environmental organisations to inaugurate the 'Hasankeyf Park of Hope' at the site of the ancient city threatened with flooding by the dam's reservoir.

Ms Jagger will plant a tree in Hasankeyf as a symbol of Peace and Hope: "I am deeply concerned about the devastating impact the controversial Ilisu dam would have on the lives of tens of thousands of people and about the irreversible loss of an invaluable cultural heritage in the Tigris valley. I am also worried the project will fuel potential conflict around water resources in the Middle East. I urge the German chancellor Angela Merkel – current holder of the EU presidency - not to grant her government's support to a project that would undermine the European Union's commitment to human rights and environmental and social standards."

The initiative also has the support of 16 German and Austrian Members of the European Parliament and 25 members of the German Bundestag, reaffirming their opposition to their governments' potential financial and material support for the Ilisu dam project and who have sent a message of support to the affected people.

If built, the dam will affect up to 78,000 people, mainly ethnic Kurds, tens of thousands of whom will be forcefully resettled and severely impact the environment. Yet, despite being years in the planning, the project fails to meet international standards on environmental assessment and resettlement.

The dam would lead to the destruction of the ancient town of Hasankeyf, a rich treasure of Assyrian, Christian, Abbasid-Islamic and Ottoman history in Turkey and one of the world's most significant cultural heritage.

Fears have also been expressed that the project could exacerbate tension in the region by disrupting the downstream flow of the River Tigris to Syria and Iraq, sparking potential "water wars".

Finance for the dam is being sought from the Export Credit Agencies (ECAs) of Switzerland, Germany and Austria. The ECAs have set over 100 conditions on their support - but have refused to disclose the details of the conditions. Earlier this month, Germany delayed its decision on the project because key conditions had not yet been met by Turkey.

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