



## **Joint Statement from the River Protection Community in Support of Environmental Defenders in the Balkans**

Across the region, there has been a troubling rise in attacks on activists. Many have been subjected to systematic intimidation, including legal harassment, media smear campaigns, physical threats, and even detention—solely for advocating for the protection of nature and the right to a healthy environment. Such repression is unacceptable and threatens not only the defenders but the fundamental values of democracy and human rights.

At the Balkan River Summit 2024, we emphasise: we must stand together to protect the rights and safety of environmental defenders in the Balkans. This is not just an environmental struggle—it is a fight for justice and basic freedoms. Our collective strength and solidarity will ensure that these voices are not silenced.

We, the undersigned summit participants, call on national governments, regional authorities, and corporations across the region to end the harassment of these defenders and respect their rights. We further urge the international community, human rights organizations, and environmental institutions to amplify their support for these activists, ensuring that their rights are protected and their voices are heard.

**In Unity and Solidarity!**

## The undersigned Summit participants

1. Cornelia Wieser, Riverwatch
2. Amelie Huber, EuroNatur Foundation
3. Roxanne Diaz, Communications Consultant
4. Dijana Klajnberg, Una River Initiative
5. Paule Gros, BiodivEarth
6. Gabriel Singer, Innsbruck University, Austria
7. Julia Henderson, Society for the Protection of Prespa
8. Zydjon Vorpsi, PPNEA
9. Vojtěch Cuřín, Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague
10. Besjana Guri, EcoAlbania
11. Roel Wouters, Charles University
12. Bruno D'Amicis, Freelance environmental photojournalist
13. Alessandro Oggioni, European biodiversity survey
14. Jelena Jovićić-Petrović, Ne damo vode Mionice/Waterkeepers of Mionica
15. Samuel Halter, River Collective
16. Aida Kapetanovic, Researcher Scuola Normale Superiore Italy
17. Bonnie Barclay, Rising Action Strategies
18. Fitore Rexhepi, Cultural worker
19. Ema Breščak, River Collective
20. Emir Delic, Beyond Trees Network
21. Eirini Lyratzaki, MedINA - Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos
22. Mihela Hladin Wolfe, Part of Blue Heart rivers campaign
23. Anna Lodeserto, Blank Pages Global
24. Dea Zyruku, Institute of Environmental Sciences & Geography. Potsdam University
25. Steven Weiss, University of Graz
26. Malgorzata Smolak, Legal consultant
27. Elena Kokthi, Agriculture University of Tirana
28. Leonard Sonten, Euronatur
29. Mara Francesca Senatore, River collective
30. Ulrich Eichelmann, Riverwatch
31. Eirini Lyratzaki, MedINA- Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos
32. Pietro Steffano, CIRF
33. Belma Nahic, Independent Researcher
34. Iva Korbar, Art platform Ljubav za Ricinu
35. Zaklina Zivkovic, Polekol
36. Strahinja Macić, Polekol / Pravo na vodu
37. Kirsi Hyvaerinen, HYVÄ Coaching & Consulting d.o.o. & [www.balkan.green](http://www.balkan.green)
38. Nicoleta Nour, Native Fish Society Slovenia
39. Zemra Skenderi
40. Sandre Josović, Partner organisation
41. Tamara Preininger, The Nature Conservancy
42. Zuzana Vachunova, Arnika

43. Danijel Loncar, United for Rivers Initiative
44. Alan Smith, geoart
45. Aleš Skalič, Slovenia
46. Annette Spangenberg, EuroNatur
47. Jovana Dokic, NGO MES
48. Iva Jericevic, Designer
49. Gjorgji Mitrevski, River conservation
50. Androniki Turlouki
51. Elvana Tivari, Legal expert
52. Ana Ždrale
53. Semra Mahmutović
54. Azra Berbić
55. Bledar Pulaj, University of Prishtina
56. Irma Popović Dujmović, TNC
57. Bojana Minović, Save the mountain rivers of Kraljevo
58. Dejan Mijovic, Civic activist
59. Alexis Katsaros, MedINA
60. Jelena Popovic, MES Co-director
61. Ferzileta Gjika, Opposition to Skavica Dam NGO
62. Lejla Kusturica, Foundation Atelier for Community Transformation - ACT
63. Norma Lizeth Ovalle Saldaña, Viaje al Microcosmos de Nuevo León
64. Emilia Serafin
65. Jovana Popović, Montenegrin Ecologists Society
66. Nebojša Redžić, Sharawatch
67. Vuk Ikovic, Ecology Justice
68. Jakob Stanič
69. Tara Sukic, EuroNatur
70. Milan Nikovic, Montenegrin institute for renewable energy and new technologies
71. Charles Grzybowski
72. Nadija Čehajić, Freshwater systems protection
73. Iva Kljajevic
74. Ferzileta Gjika, Opposition to Skavica Dam