

Greenpeace Accuses Spain of Using Illegal Wood from Brazilian Amazon

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At 10.00 am this morning, 41 Greenpeace activists sealed the entrance to Madrid's prestigious Queen Sofia Museum (Reina Sofia), and declared it an ancient forest crime scene.

The activists hung a banner in front of the museum reading 'Forest Crime in the Reina Sofia' and drew the outline of a tree's 'body' on the ground.

Today's action followed the discovery that the museum's newly opened extension has been built using timber bought from companies involved in the illegal logging of the Amazon rainforest.

Documents provided to Greenpeace by the museum show that the timber was imported by the Spanish company 'Maderas Besteiro'. This company purchased the timber from three Brazilian companies; Madeireira São Marcos; Serraria São José; and Serraria Santa Clara.

All these companies have been involved in illegal logging in Pará State and have been fined by IBAMA, the federal agency responsible for environmental issues and forest conservation in Brazil.

Greenpeace International forest campaigner, Belinda Fletcher, said: "Illegal logging is out of control in the Amazon. It's a disgrace that the Spanish Government is spending public money on fueling this corrupt trade in stolen rainforest timber."

The Queen Sofia Museum is one of the best known in Spain and houses Picasso's Guernica. Designed by the architect Jean Nouvel, it has been extended over the last three years by the Spanish construction company Dragados/ACS.

The timber species (jatobá) used in the library, exhibition rooms, auditorium and offices comes from Pará State, the most extensively logged region of the Amazon.

Life on Earth depends on ancient forests. They are the richest, most diverse habitats and help stabilize climate. They are also home to millions of indigenous and forest dwelling people.

Seventeen per cent of the Amazon has been completely wiped out over the past 30 years according to the INPE (Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais - National Institute of Spatial Researches), and even more has been damaged by destructive logging. Today, it is estimated that between 60 to 80 per cent of logging in the Brazilian Amazon is illegal.

"It's absurd that it's illegal to import stolen works of art into the EU, but it's not illegal to import stolen wood to build a museum like this. If the EU does not act to stop the illegal timber trade, the world's ancient forests and the life they support will disappear forever," said Fletcher.

Greenpeace is calling on European governments to outlaw all imports of illegal timber and to promote environmentally and socially responsible forest management worldwide.

Greenpeace – www.greenpeace.org