

Title Representatives of 186 civil society associations gathered outside the Turkish Parliament on Monday in protests against Turkey's contradictory and worrying "Nature and Biodiversity Conservation" draft law. Contrary to its title, the law opens every protected area in Turkey to development – including threatened habitats – which would have disastrous consequences for biodiversity. Environmental NGOs protested alongside health, education and human rights groups with "We Won't Give Anatolia" signs in clear message of opposition. Monday's civil action was preceded by discussions of growing concern across Turkey. BirdLife's Turkish Partner organization Doga Denerji suggested that the law would lead to investments including dams and hydro-electric power plants across the Anatolia, indiscriminate of conservation areas such as national parks, which are currently protected by law. "The Draft Law on Nature and Biodiversity Conservation which leads up the destruction of our land, our water and our vast biological and cultural diversity is the execution warrant of Anatolia. Peoples of Anatolia will not let this happen." said Pervin Çoban Savran, the leader of the last Anatolian nomads, Sarkeçili Yörüks. "No one authorizes politicians to destroy our natural and cultural heritage. The government has to realize that Turkey is a signatory of many international conventions such Convention on Biological Diversity, Bern and Ramsar and this draft law is clearly not in line with the requirements of these international conventions. Therefore, this draft law must be withdrawn in no time." Dr. Güven Eken, President of Doga Denerji, stated, "It rarely happens that NGOs working in different areas come together to raise their concerns on a draft law. This time, NGOs ranging from local groups to those with hundreds of thousands of members have united to stop this act. The civil society in Turkey is clearly against this law and we therefore expect the government of Turkey withdraws this law immediately from the parliament."

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