

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the devastating impact of the life cycle of coal (mining, combustion, and waste disposal) on the lives and livelihoods of local rural communities in the Western Balkans, an area with some of Europe's highest levels of air pollution.

It also investigates the impacts of coal mining and related activities throughout the coal cycle on people's right to adequate food and nutrition and to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and other interconnected rights. There is a particular focus on local struggles and resistance to the impacts of coal power in three locations: the villages of Kličevac and Drmno, near Drmno mine and Kostolac power plant in Serbia; Kamengrad mine and Kamengrad village, in the municipality of Sanski Most in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Ugljevik power plant and coal mine, also in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Testimonies gathered from local people and civil society groups, combined with observations by FIAN International, reveal clear indications of ecological destruction. These include polluted and disrupted groundwater supplies, which leads to waterlogging, water shortages and diminished agricultural yields. Furthermore, air pollution and changes to wind patterns from large scale excavations have been reported, along with plant diseases, flooding and subsiding of homes and farm facilities,<sup>2</sup> and increased instances of respiratory illness, allergies, and other severe health implications.

These coal-related impacts severely threaten the ecological basis of food production and have significant consequences for biodiversity and natural resources, which are essential for realizing the right to adequate food and nutrition, and a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Despite this, the governments of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have failed to act appropriately. Decision-making processes are often not transparent, participatory, or democratic, and frequently fail to adhere to national and international legal frameworks. There is a marked absence of consultation with affected communities, and credible environmental impact assessments. Communities adversely affected by coal mining and related activities have been fighting for years to be resettled and compensated for their loss of agricultural land and property. Small-scale food producers in the Western Balkans consistently call for policies and resource allocation to bolster and support local and sustainable food production, including small-scale food producers.

The situation is in clear violation of both countries' commitments and obligations regarding human rights, the environment, and climate, as enshrined in a range of international instruments including: the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD), and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Additionally, this situation and both States' acts and omissions contravene relevant national legal and policy frameworks.



Drmno power plant Kostolac B1,2 | Credit : CEKOR, Serbia