

# Help Save the last great European Wilderness

from the irreversible destruction of heavy industry

Join us at the Friends of Iceland International Protest Camp in the Icelandic Highlands starting 21st July at Kárahnjúkar dams

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Information: <http://www.savingiceland.org>



"ALCOA PROFITS  
ICELAND BLEEDS"

"Iceland is NOT  
for sale"

Kárahnjúkar dams are raised on  
lies and abuse of power

## S.O.S. From Iceland



Present dams and future plans to dam glacial rivers just to create power for heavy industry such as aluminium plants!

## Help! Nature Under Attack! Stop Them Killing Iceland!

Stop the Icelandic government and arms manufacturer Alcoa destroying Europe's last remaining great wilderness for an aluminium plant!

Be aware of the 'master plan' to 'develop' Iceland's beautiful nature into a heavy industry hell servicing the greed of aluminium corporations!

It has already started. The Kárahnjúkar dam project in the Icelandic highlands is well under way... But it can still be stopped!

How can you help?

Join us in the dam-affected areas and make your opposition to this environmental apocalypse felt!

## Call for an international protest gathering in Iceland 21st of July 2006

The Icelandic highlands are the last great expanse of true wilderness left in Western Europe. Now the country's hydroelectric potential has been targeted by multinational corporations, who intend to establish large-scale heavy industry in these hitherto pristine hinterlands. These multinational vandals - willingly helped by the Icelandic government - are about to produce an environmental catastrophe of unprecedented proportions.

A series of gigantic dams is already under construction at Kárahnjúkar in the eastern highlands of Iceland. These dams are designated solely to generate energy for one massive ALCOA aluminium smelter to be built by war-profiteers Bechtel in the beautiful fjord of Reydarfjörður, and due to be operational in 2007. The national grid will not derive a single kilowatt from it for domestic use. The natural habitat of many rare and endangered plants and animals will be submerged, lost, destroyed.

Other aluminium corporations are greedily lining up for the cheap energy supply promised by future hydro-electric dam projects planned all over the Icelandic highlands.

Incredibly, some areas earmarked for destruction - such as Kringilsárrani and Thjórsárver in the southern highlands - are protected under Icelandic and international law. All are of outstanding natural beauty and their unique botanical, geological, biological and ecological characteristics are of universal scientific importance.

Thus far the Icelandic government has not hesitated to use tactics such as personal threats and professional persecution against individuals who oppose its energy policies, and Icelandic environmentalists are fighting a difficult battle that they predict will not be won overnight.

The Icelandic High Court ruled in June 2005 that the ALCOA factory's planning permission is invalid as the company has not produced a proper environmental impact assessment, yet the building of the factory continues as if nothing had happened! How much more rotten can the Aluminium Republic of Iceland become!?

ALCOA is now hastily putting together an EIA, replete with meaningless clichés such as, 'The most modern pollution controls will be used'. We have become very familiar with this sort of double talk from ALCOA and their scheming servant, the

As a response to this greater awareness of environmental issues Reykjavík City council (who own 45% of Landsvirkjun) finally ruled in January 2006 that they oppose any further destruction of the Thjórsárver wetlands. This has forced ALCAN to relinquish their claims on energy from Thjórsárver and Landsvirkjun to „put aside“ their plans for the Ramsar listed site.

This is a great victory for environmentalists and shows that our struggle is already having desired results. This also shows that non-violent direct action can be a very effective way to fight the enemies of nature. But the licence of Landsvirkjun to tamper with Thjórsárver remains to be revoked by parliament. The cancellation of the Nordlingaöldu project (Thjórsárver) also puts other areas in greater danger. Now Landsvirkjun is going ahead with two dams further south in the river of Thjórsá to provide energy for the ALCAN extension. One of Europe's most beautiful lakes, Langisjór, is still threatened and the pressure is increasing for the geothermal areas found all over Iceland. Geothermal energy is destined to become the new bogus „green“ energy of the aluminium industry. „The monster must be fed.“

The developments in the Thjórsárver issue are a great encouragement, but they also intensify the fight that is ahead.

Next summer we will be joined by thousands of Icelanders and activists from around the world. The summer of 2006 will be the crucial moment in the struggle to stop this gargantuan ecocide. The gathering will take place in the dam-affected area near Kárahnjúkar. It will be organised by 'Íslandsvinir' (Friends of Iceland.)

The camp's purpose is to be a platform to express non-violent opposition to the destruction of Icelandic nature. It will be host to a lot of creative actions from all sorts of activists and artists. This will be something everybody will be able to take part in. We will also run workshops/events on numerous environmental, political and cultural issues and hikes around the area. World famous and not so famous bands will play at the camp.

Iceland is the last great expanse of truly unspoilt and magical wilderness left in Europe. It should really be a cause for celebration and wonder how pristine this strangely vibrant island still remains. The world cannot afford to allow the divine Icelandic dragon of flowers and ice to be devastated by corporate greed.

Join the fight and read more about saving Iceland, the website is full of useful resources and material about the killers of Iceland

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or write to us at [savingiceland@riseup.net](mailto:savingiceland@riseup.net)

2005 of a large group of protesters from the international community should be obvious in the light of globalisation. After all, the government has invited multinational corporations to the country to take part in this feeding frenzy of heavy industry that now has Icelandic society and nature in its grip. We are fighting a global ecological crime perpetrated on a global natural heritage.

The support of hundreds of international environmentalists last summer was a great boost to morale and their participation in the 2006 gathering will be of paramount importance.



Summer solstice 2005 marked the beginning of a highly inspirational and unique event in the history of Icelandic activism. The international protest camp at Kárahnjúkar attracted people from all over the world, including the UK, Spain, Austria, the Basque country, Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Luxembourg, Belgium, Sweden,

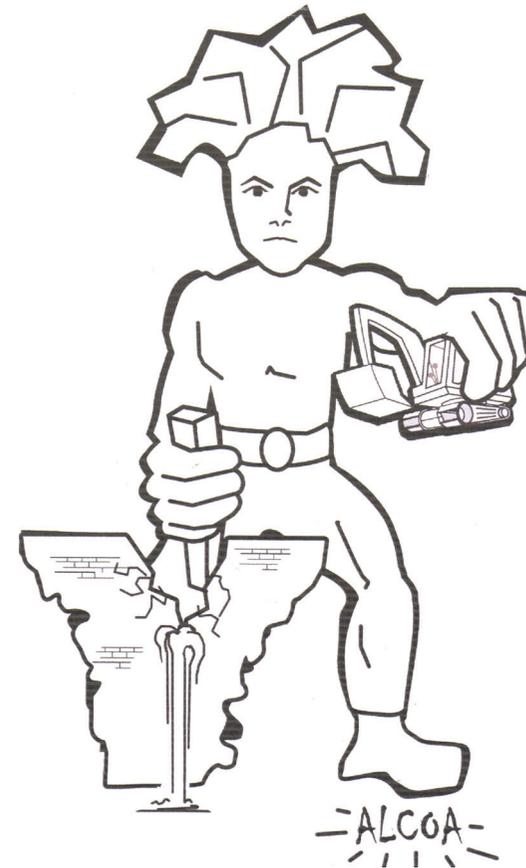
Canada and the USA. Unfortunately, not many Icelanders managed to shake off their apathy and complacency in order to show up at the camp, but now we find that the camp and the direct actions of the summer have had a profound effect on Icelandic society by giving people the courage to make their voices heard after years of a repressive political atmosphere.

One of many effects the protests this summer have had on the Icelandic nation is that people are now actually daring to change their minds about the dams. The protests this summer managed to get the heavy industry issue and its consequences back into focus. As mentioned above, many people working in the financial sector are raising their voices against the Kárahnjúkar project, pointing out that the aluminium industry adds very little to the Icelandic economy. We have managed to create a fresh new focus and dialogue in Icelandic society about heavy industry. Every day we see new demands that this unimaginative neo-Stalinist emphasis on build-up of heavy industry must be stopped. More young Icelandic people are joining the fight. Hope has been rekindled.

Icelandic National Power Company, Landsvirkjun. However, more and more people are beginning to see through these lies.

The term 'Kárahnjúkar problem' has become common usage in Iceland. People are now losing their jobs all over Iceland due to the unhealthy expansion of the small Icelandic economy caused by the massive Kárahnjúkar project. Many Icelandic export companies are now either going bankrupt or being forced to relocate abroad due to the fact the Icelandic currency is too strong. Inflation is rising and the government is steadily coming under heavier flak from the financial sector for its heavy industry policy. This is exactly what economists opposed to the project predicted would happen, but their voices were either ignored or vilified by the government.

There is an ever-growing awareness amongst the Icelandic population that the Kárahnjúkar dams are ill fated. The immense problems with their construction and the massive scale of the ensuing environmental destruction is becoming clearer every day.



Furthermore, the dam is being built right in a seismically unstable area and would present a serious threat to the local population and environment. The government and Landsvirkjun tried to suppress evidence for this for a long time, but finally admitted the truth in early 2005.

Furthermore, geologists point out that it is highly likely that the immense weight of water in the reservoir will create further fissures in the unstable geological crust and, as a consequence, will never be able to hold enough water to make the dam operational and endanger the safety of the local communities.

A Gallup poll carried out in March 2005 showed that around 50% of the nation believes that the Kárahnjúkar project is a huge mistake.

One of the main arguments for the dam is that hydropower is eco-friendly. Yet the reservoirs would submerge

vegetation which in turn would rot and contribute to greenhouse gases. Recent studies show that hydroelectric dams produce significant amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> and methane - some produce more greenhouse gases than fossil-fuel power plants. Nor would the reservoirs provide renewable energy because they would ultimately silt



up with sediment from the glacial rivers. The constantly fluctuating water levels in the reservoirs would cause dust storms and soil erosion which would have a devastating effect on the vegetation of the region.

Moreover, starving the marine life of the normal silt emissions would constitute a serious threat to the valuable Icelandic fishing grounds. A recent study shows that free flowing glacial rivers are vital in reducing greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere and as such are already harnessed by nature. Blocking the silt emissions to the ocean nullifies this immensely beneficial role of glacial rivers. The dams would also destroy the breeding grounds of thousands of rare birds, a substantial proportion of the reindeer population, and one of Iceland's largest seal communities.

The Kárahnjúkar dam construction is already falling way behind schedule. Experts agree that 90% of the irreversible environmental damage will occur only when the water floods the land. The longer the construction of the dams and headrace tunnels takes, the more time WE have to stop them. Our demands include the immediate halt of construction on the dams at Kárahnjúkar. We also demand a complete review of the way the scientific research has been interpreted and of the autocratic decision-making behind the many other ongoing projects and plans for the sacrifice of the Icelandic countryside to power further heavy industrialisation.

We oppose the Third-world policy of concentrating on primary production as the only option, with its monotonous employment opportunities and unhealthy working conditions. A Gallup survey carried out for the Icelandic anti-dam group NatureWatch in January-February 2005 showed that 90% of the nation don't want any more heavy industry in Iceland and that they favour an emphasis on knowledge-based low-impact industries and tourism. Yet the Icelandic government has advertised the Icelandic people in international trade magazines as a low-wage workforce ideal for primary

production. This is in keeping with the growing gap between poor and rich under this government and the decline in health care and education.

Workers for the heavily corrupt Impregilo, the main contractor on the Kárahnjúkar dams, live in squalid conditions, are routinely put in life-threatening situations and abused in various other ways. Icelandic trades unionists have repeatedly complained that Impregilo have been allowed to break the law for months at a time.

By encouraging the use of cheap international migratory labour for building the dams and building and working in the ALCOA aluminium smelter, the Icelandic authorities are deliberately trying to undermine the achievements of a century-long struggle for the rights of Icelandic workers. This also exposes as completely false the claims of the Icelandic government that the Kárahnjúkar project is to create jobs for the Icelandic people of the East. Over 80% of the workers building the dams and the ALCOA factory are foreign!

This goes hand in hand with the sale of the cheapest energy in all of Europe at the cost of the vandalism of one of Iceland's greatest assets, which is unspoilt nature. The hypocrisy of ALCOA and the Icelandic government is clear to behold in the exemption which the government negotiated from the Kyoto protocol in order to make this heavy-industry policy possible. Ironically, Icelanders boast of living in an unspoilt land and promote the country as pristine. If the government's policy of heavy industrialisation is not stopped, such a promotion of Icelandic nature is absurd and false.

ALCOA (yes, again!) want to build another aluminium factory in the north of the country. ALCAN and Century have already been given the green light to expand greatly their existing smelters in the south-west of Iceland. Century also want to build yet another aluminium smelter in Helguvík, near Keflavík. In addition, R&D Carbon Ltd. have secured planning permission for a highly polluting anode rod plant at Katanes in Hvalfjörður. Environmental scientists have alerted the people of Reykjavík to the grave consequences if these projects are realised. The scientists calculate that Faxaflói bay, where the capital is situated, 'is destined to quickly become the most heavily polluted area in Northern Europe'.

Let's not forget that almost all the companies mentioned above have a long history of convictions for crimes against nature and still have judgements pending on charges of serious environmental damage or corruption. Icelandic environmentalists are prepared for a battle that is certain to go on for many years. International help and pressure will be of paramount importance in that fight. ALCOA has bought its way into the World Wide Fund for Nature and as a result we have lost valuable support from a major international NGO. This may partly explain the scandalous international conspiracy of silence when it comes to the desperate situation of Icelandic environmentalism.

This attack on Icelandic nature is not a domestic affair for the Icelanders; pollution knows no national borders. The reason for the presence in Iceland in the summer of