

Environmentalists warn of Spain oil-drilling

March 6 2014



Protestors against oil exploration off the coast of the Balearic Islands demonstrate in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, on February 22, 2014

Campaigners warned Thursday of environmental threats from new oil-prospecting projects off Spain's Balearic and Canary Islands, two major tourist destinations.

Campaign group Ecologists in Action said in a report that 10 [oil](#) installations were operating off Spanish coasts and new oil-prospecting licences had been granted for the islands that draw millions of tourists every year.

Carlos Arribas, spokesman for the association in the Valencia region, called the drilling plans "a threat to the integrity of the Mediterranean".

The group said the proposed prospection and certain oil installations already in place off Spain's coasts posed a "constant risk of pollution" and threatened sea species and fishing.

In the Canary Islands, Spanish petrol giant Repsol is waiting for final authorisation to start exploring for oil in its Atlantic waters—a project that has sparked protests by local officials.

In the Balearic Islands, the company Capricorn Spain Limited, a subsidiary of the Scottish energy group Cairn, is carrying out environmental impact studies with a view to probing for oil.

"There is emphatic social opposition to these prospection projects," said Arribas, citing recent demonstrations in Valencia and the nearby Balearics, which include popular destinations Majorca and Ibiza.

Ecologists in Action said sonic shocks used by prospectors were a threat to species such as sea turtles, whales and dolphins.

Of all the advanced economies of the OECD grouping, Spain is the most reliant on energy imports, buying in 99.9 percent of its oil and gas.

The conservative government is looking to reduce this dependence by developing Spain's own energy production.

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Citation: Environmentalists warn of Spain oil-drilling (2014, March 6) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-03-environmentalists-spain-oil-drilling.html>

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