

EU court orders Poland to suspend logging in ancient forest

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Poland's right-wing government says it authorized logging in the Bialowieza Forest, a UNESCO World Heritage site, but the EU has ordered logging activity to be suspended as scientists allege the logging is a cover for commercial activity

The European Union's top court has ordered Poland's right-wing government to suspend logging in the ancient Bialowieza forest pending a final judgement, a spokesman said Friday.

Bialowieza, straddling Poland's eastern border with Belarus, includes one of the largest surviving parts of the primeval [forest](#) that covered the European plain 10,000 years ago.

The UNESCO World Heritage site also boasts unique plant and animal life, including the continent's largest mammal, the European bison.

"We issued a decree yesterday ordering the immediate halt to the forest's exploitation," an EU Court of Justice spokesman told AFP on Friday.

He added the order was "temporary" pending a final court ruling in the case, which could take months, possibly years.

The [court](#) was acting on a July 13 request by the European Commission, the 28-nation EU executive, for "interim measures" to stop large-scale [logging](#) in "one of Europe's last remaining primeval forests."

The Polish government has said it authorised the logging, which began in May last year, to contain damage caused by a spruce bark beetle infestation and to fight the risk of forest fires.

But scientists, ecologists and the European Union have protested and activists allege the logging is a cover for commercial cutting of protected old-growth forests.

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