

Activists denounce police violence in Lützerath, Germany

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German police arrested numerous demonstrators since the beginning of the protests in Lützerath.

Berlin, January 17 (RHC)-- Activists protesting against the extension of an open-pit lignite mine in the town of Lützerath, in western Germany, denounced Sunday that the police used extreme violence to repress the protest held the day before, which ended in clashes with dozens of injured.

A spokeswoman for the protest organizers, Indigo Drau, said the officers beat activists uncontrollably, used pepper spray and water cannons to disperse them, and whipped their dogs to bite them. A first responder, Birte Schramm, said that at least 20 activists were taken to hospital, although local media reported that there were many more injured among the demonstrators.

The Aachen police, in charge of the operation to evict the Lützerath activists, accused them of not protesting peacefully and deliberately seeking confrontation. He reported that Saturday's confrontations left a balance of 70 gendarmes injured and that some thirty vehicles were damaged. He specified that since the beginning of the eviction, 154 criminal investigations have been opened.

Saturday's protests were attended by some 15,000 people, according to the police, although activists put the number of participants at 35,000. During Friday and Saturday, the protesters were supported by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg.

On Sunday, police said the operation to evict Lützerath was over, although they admitted that the rescue of two activists who barricaded themselves in an underground tunnel was continuing. A police spokesman, Andreas Müller, said that the rescue operation is being carried out by RWE, which operates the Garzweiler II lignite mine.

The demonstrators who gathered in Lützerath are opposed to the energy policy of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who is betting on increasing the use of coal and other fossil fuels as an alternative to the energy crisis that Europe is going through after the pressure measures against Russia.

They point out that a return to fossil fuels will increase carbon emissions and environmental pollution.

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