



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Romanian citizens of Pungesti backed by Greenpeace force Chevron to stop fracking operations, 2014

Time period notes: *General anti-fracking movement in Romania begins in February 2012.*

October
2013

to: July
2014

Country: Romania

Location City/State/Province: *Pungesti, Vaslui County; Sili?tea, Vaslui County; Cluj-Napoca, Cluj County; Sibiu; Bucharest*

Location Description: *Protests were centered in Pungesti but many other communities rose up in solidarity.*

Goals:

Immediate cessation of exploratory drilling in Pungesti and complete withdrawal of fracking activities.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention › Declaration of future referendum
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 011. Records, radio, and television › Online TV station
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 020. Prayer and worship › Protestors held a group prayer.
- 038. Marches
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction › Road blockade
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support › Letter of opposition to the President
- 004. Signed public statements › Call to police to respect human rights
- 006. Group or mass petitions › Online Mass Petition
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 011. Records, radio, and television › Online TV station
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 020. Prayer and worship › Protestors held a group prayer.
- 038. Marches
- 121. Refusal of public support › Refusal of access to fracking site
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Hunger Strike

- 168. Nonviolent raids › Breakdown of fences
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction › Road blockade
- 173. Nonviolent occupation
- Other... › Social Media Campaign

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 020. Prayer and worship › Protestors held a group prayer.
- 038. Marches › March to town under blockade
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Rally
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance › Calls for resignation
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Hunger Strike

Methods in 4th segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Rally
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance › Calls for resignation

Methods in 5th segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 6th segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › Declaration urging cessation to fracking
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 162. Sit-in
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Environment

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- Activists nationwide
- Elderly
- Members of the affected communities
- children
- citizens nationwide
- farmers

- foreigners
- priests

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Maria Olteanu, Mariana Morosanu, Father Laiu, VIRA (leader not known), Greenpeace (Laurentiu Ciocirlan)

Partners:

Maria-Nicoleta Andreescu (Helsinki Committee Association for the defence of human rights in Romania), Friends of the Earth Europe, Romania fara EI (George Epurescu)

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Citizens nationwide
- Elderly
- Members of the affected community
- Priests
- activists
- farmers
- foreigners

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Friends of the Earth Europe
- Local lawyers

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Local MP and councillors

Groups in 4th Segment:

- citizens in neighbouring cities

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Greenpeace protesters

Segment Length: 6 weeks

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Chevron, Local Mayor (Mircea Vlas?), Romania's ruling left-wing coalition (especially Prime Minister Victor Ponta)

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Extended standoff, Blockade of town

Campaigner violence:

Throwing of stones, and eggs.

Repressive Violence:

Beatings by police, arbitrary detention without medical attention

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

1 point out of 6 points

Survival:

0.5 points out of 1 point

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

The fight to stop fracking has not yet finished. Although Chevron has retreated from the site for now, it has not yet announced complete withdrawal from its site.

Anti-fracking movements in Romania originated in February 2012 when Bulgarian activists, enthused from their recent victory over their government in anti-fracking legislation, contacted their Romanian counterparts. The Bulgarians informed the Romanians of the potential impending fracking in Romania and from this point on, the Romanian activists began using their Facebook group page to increase awareness of, and actively campaign against the dangers of fracking. Local priests, notably Father Laiu, organised the base resistance against fracking, and the youth association, VIRA educated the Pungesti residents on fracking. The newly organised Romanians were furious when the new Romanian government reneged on its campaign promises and conceded vast tracts of land to Chevron for exploration drilling in the name of energy independence. Protest assemblies grew in Bucharest and Barlad, a Romanian city lying near the conceded lands.

Despite such public opposition, the local government accepted Chevron's applications on the 3 October, and Chevron sent in the machinery required on the 14 October. News of the arriving machinery prompted quick reactions from the Pungesti residents. 150 came out and blocked the road. In the following days, villagers and activists from Pungesti and surrounding cities reinforced the blockade. They formed human chains to block the entrance of trucks into the Chevron compound. The riot police maintained a standoff in the beginning. However, on the 16 October, the gendarmerie (the Romanian paramilitary force) violently cracked down on the protesters, beating many elderly and children. News of these crackdowns spurred national support for the protesters in Pungesti, and further protests broke out in Bucharest. Protesters set up camp on Chevron's drilling site on the 16 October, and Romanians nationwide and foreigners started to come to the camp in solidarity. Protesters also established TV Pungesti to broadcast the events unfolding in Pungesti and by 17 October, almost 700 protesters had gathered at the site. Chevron again suspended its drilling efforts.

The Pungesti struggle took a whole new turn in December when the Romanian government cracked down on the protesters with unprecedented force. One thousand (Three hundred by official count) riot police entered Pungesti on the late night of 2 December to clear out the protesters. The police prevented all access to the site, making it impossible for additional protesters to join the occupiers. Protesters who had remained at the drilling site were beaten and arrested. Chevron promptly sent in the machinery and began setting up on the morning of 2 December.

When the dust had settled, Chevron had built fences to protect its site and Pungesti had come under special jurisdiction of the gendarmerie. The gendarmerie also severely limited access to and from Pungesti and barred entry to journalists. Meanwhile, Romanians nationwide converged in Pungesti on the 7 December in a massive protest rally. In Pungesti, protesters started to break down the fence around the drilling site which quickly escalated into a violent confrontation with the riot police. For the second time, Chevron suspended its drilling operations but it quickly resumed its work the next day when the gendarmerie

dispersed the protesters from the site.

The protests in Pungesti saw the greatest diversity in style and amount in December. In response to the brutal crackdowns, Friends of the Earth Europe sent its members to investigate, and produced an official letter calling on the president to curb the human rights violation and the environmental damages occurring in Pungesti. Online petitions attracted almost 48 000 signatures within two weeks, and protesters held hunger strikes in Bucharest. The government, however, responded with greater force and put Pungesti under siege by blocking all movements to and from the city. Riot police also forced the local shops to close, and arrested and detained many people without explanation.

Given the strength of the control that Romanian officials exercised in Pungesti, activists could organize far fewer protests in the days that followed December 2013. Marches and rallies against Chevron and the local mayor were also limited in scope compared to the previous year. The riot police also continued barring journalist entry to Pungesti, restricting the flow of information.

Greenpeace activists re-energised the protest when they arrived in Pungesti on the 7 July. Activists from 7 countries chained themselves up and blocked entry to the site. There was no violence and Greenpeace protesters retreated when Chevron announced on the 9 July that it had finished its exploratory drilling and would soon withdraw. Chevron did not explain why it only dug up to 3000 feet when it had previously planned to dig up to 4000 feet.

Thus, Chevron retreated from the site, earlier than they had previously announced. The company refused to comment on the amount of shale that could be expected to be extracted from Pungesti and retained the drilling site concessions given to it by the Romanian government.

Research Notes

Influences:

- 1) Influenced by the success of Bulgarian people in banning fracking
- 2) Ongoing protests in Pungesti sparked further anti-fracking protests around the country

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