

# RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF A WORLD IN CRISIS

Dismantling the power of polluters,  
defending the power of people

---

global witness 

Annual report 2022





“  
**The role of Global Witness should be to become part of a movement to shift the balance of power from polluters profiting most from climate emergency to the people most affected.**”

Mike Davis, Global Witness CEO

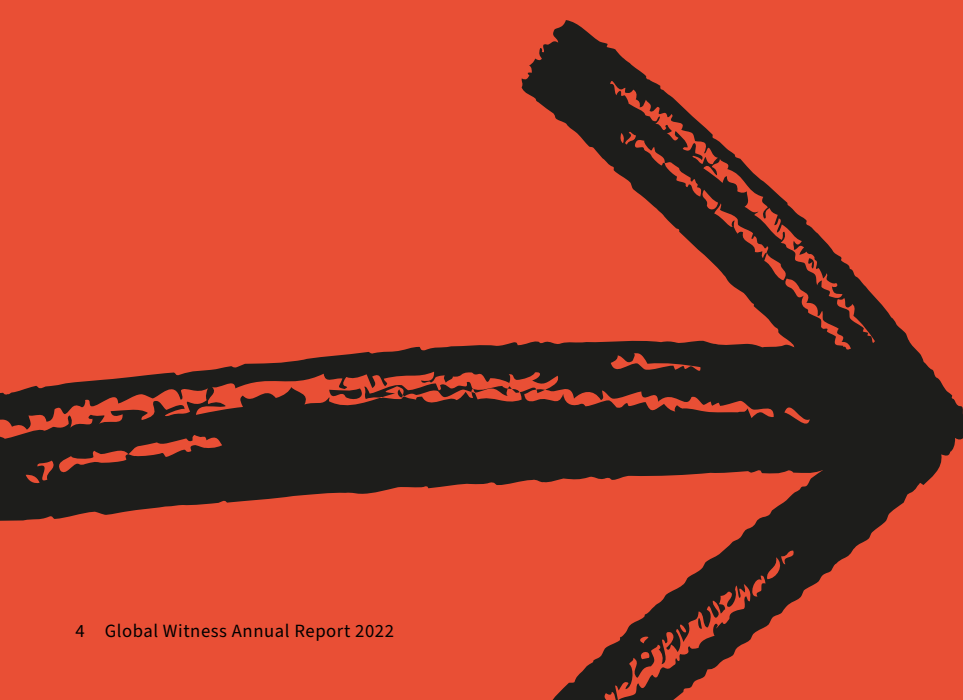
## CONTENTS

Foreword .....	04
Dismantling the power of the big polluting fossil fuel industry.....	10
Putting people at the centre of solving the climate crisis .....	18
Tackling the financiers banking on deforestation .....	28
Fighting big tech's distortion of online spaces .....	32
Our partners .....	36
Our supporters.....	37
Income and expenditure .....	38
Endnotes.....	40
Follow our latest action.....	42



Mike Davis  
Global Witness CEO

“2022 began amidst a global pandemic and swiftly brought a brutal new war that made it harder for people all over the world to pay for their energy and their food. It saw threats to democracy and civic freedoms on all continents; in many cases amplified by the insidious power of social media. The planetary reckoning of climate breakdown brought terror and deprivation to people struck by extreme heatwaves, wildfires and floods.”



How could we at Global Witness, an investigative campaign group that takes on the toxic forces driving the climate emergency, respond and find – amidst the turmoil – opportunities for the systemic change we all need? We had to consider the connections between the blizzard of events, the bigger picture they both highlighted and obscured, our direction as an organisation and our capacity to balance long-term strategic focus with agility.

**As a starting point,  
we recognised that the  
climate emergency is  
utterly one sided.**

Indeed, the architects of planetary meltdown are still the ones writing the story of what this crisis is and what it means for the rest of us. They have a hand on the pen when governments write new rules that promise action to address it. For the sake of all of us alive today and for future generations, this must change now. The role of Global Witness should be to become part of a movement to shift the balance of power from polluters profiting most from the climate emergency to the people most adversely affected.

### **INFLUENCING THE CLIMATE DEBATE**

What should that look like? In 2022, we set about finding new creative pathways to influencing the climate debate; showing up in ways that bring a more human story which connects people with issues that can seem impersonal, abstract, and exclusive. That meant refining our investigate-expose-advocate model, using pacier investigations that increasingly draw on cutting-edge, data-driven techniques. We experimented with different approaches to communicating what our investigations revealed – working harder to reach those that we need to persuade as well as those that already agree. As we engaged with lawmakers and officials, we thought more deeply about how we brought our partners into those discussions and how our work might build a platform to elevate the voices of others.

We decided we wanted to be an organisation that others could count on to move at speed and scale to respond to new challenges and adapt with the fluidity of the shape-shifting climate debate itself. We also recognised that, to be the best version of ourselves, we would need to be as collaborative within as without – operating as a team with one overriding objective rather than a loose federation of neighbourly, but somewhat disparate, Global Witnesses.

“

**COP27 confronted the world with a disturbing illustration of who is in the room and who has power when decisions about our planet are made – the big polluters – and who is shut out.”**

Looking back on 2022, our teams stepped forward, took calculated risks, learned from what worked and what didn't, and generated energy and innovation across Global Witness in the process.

### **PUTIN'S BLOOD OIL**

Events played their part too. Ten days after Russia began its full-scale assault on Ukraine, I got a call from someone who introduced themselves as part of a network of Ukrainians developing responses to the invasion. “We've seen Global Witness's work on blood diamonds. We want you to investigate Putin's blood oil.” The caller highlighted how, when Putin was planning his war, he was clear on who would pay for it. The funders would be international consumers of fossil fuels, notably Europeans whose governments had spent decades cultivating an addiction to Russian oil and gas as part of a colossally ill-conceived geopolitical gambit.

Was this the biggest resource-fuelled war in history, or a shattering of Europe's assumptions about its energy supply, with huge implications for the climate emergency? Assuming it might well be both, we immediately set up a team of half a dozen investigators, campaigners, and communications specialists. We developed a rapid stream of investigative stories that might help people understand how the world's dependency on oil and gas was driving horrendous human rights abuses in a war with the potential to go nuclear, while hastening the destruction of our planet. You can read, in the pages that follow, how our team set about shaping the behaviour of the oil and gas majors and traders financing and profiting from Putin's crimes.

### **ENERGY CRISES**

As the summer was closing, energy prices leaping and inflation ballooning, it dawned on us that the world's biggest polluters – oil and gas firms cooking the planet with their products and funding the devastation of Ukraine – were about to take centre stage in a third, related, global crisis. The war in which these firms are so heavily implicated was pushing the already rising energy costs to unaffordable levels, leaving people having to choose between heating and eating.

Borrowing from our Ukraine Project experience, we quickly reorganised ourselves to create another new team, a Fossil Fuels Newsroom, to start telling the story of how oil and gas majors – pillars of the political, as well as economic establishments of the UK and parts of Europe – are making themselves richer at everyone else's expense and driving poverty and injustice. The team swiftly made its mark on the public debate in the UK – as well as internationally – through its exposure, with partners, of a record number of fossil fuel lobbyists at COP27 in Egypt.

### **CLIMATE ACTIVISTS**

COP27 confronted the world with a disturbing illustration of who is in the room and who has power when decisions about our planet are made – the big polluters – and who is shut out: Indigenous communities and others defending the environment and those worst affected by climate emergency.

Our Land and Environmental Defenders campaign – formed following the killing of a former Global Witness staff member a decade before – is dedicated to helping advance the agendas of those on the frontlines of planetary protection, whose rights are trampled on and voices shut down. Thanks to their work with a global network of partners, there are signs that the message is getting through. At the climate summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, the UN Secretary General and Norwegian Prime Minister both used their speeches to underscore the role, and the sacrifices, of defenders.

### **CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY**

Meanwhile, the work of our Corporate Accountability Team, within a coalition of civil society organisations, to persuade the EU to introduce rules that would hold companies accountable for environmental harms and human rights abuses, finally bore fruit after years of tireless advocacy. In February 2022, the European Commission released a proposal for a law that could give greater protections to

land and environmental defenders and other communities harmed by global supply chains. A key Global Witness priority for 2023 is to reinforce this work and maximise the chances of a strong corporate accountability law emerging by the end of the year.

### **FORESTS**

Global Witness's campaign to take the finance out of deforestation also scored a breakthrough in Europe in 2022, with the passing of a new law designed to address the EU's global deforestation footprint. Our Forests Team supported and added to our partners' work by providing investigations-based evidence needed to remedy flaws in the draft law that would have exempted imports of rubber, for example, while also leading work to build the long-term case for the new regulation to cover financiers too.



A climate justice rally and march organised by the COP26 Coalition took place in Glasgow, UK, on 6 November 2021. This was part of the Global March for Climate Justice, with actions happening across the world.

## FOREWORD

In 2023, the Forests Team will be developing a new stream of work that borrows from the nimble investigations and story-telling approaches of our Ukraine Project and Fossil Fuels Newsroom to place greater scrutiny on the role of another category of powerful global polluters: the international banks and asset managers profiting from the demolition of the world's forests.

Also coming up in 2023 will be the exciting relaunch of Global Witness's Natural Resource Governance (NRG) campaign. In 2022, the NRG Team completed the design of an ambitious new strategy – developed with a network of activists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Zambia and Zimbabwe – to build the case for fairness in the global green transition. The focus will be the rush for the transition minerals needed to make everything from electric vehicles to solar panels and ensuring that communities in Global South countries receive a fair share of the full range of technological, as well as financial benefits. In 2022, the team tested out its new approach with a visually compelling and internationally influential exposé of the impacts of heavy rare earth mining in conflict-affected northern Myanmar that drew on satellite imagery analysis as well as undercover fieldwork.

## **BIG TECH**

Adding to our efforts to empower those shut out of public debates and decision-making, our Digital Threats to Democracy Team embarked on a rapid sequence of investigations in 2022 to test out social media companies' will and capacity to prevent disinformation and hate speech. Highlighting instances where platforms such as Facebook were willing to publish incitement to ethnic violence – such as in Ethiopia – through to Big Tech's complicity in undermining climate-critical elections in countries such as Brazil and the US, our team has progressively built up the case for a fundamental change in social media firms' business model.

Standing back from the adjustments we began to make to our campaigning approach in 2022, we started to consider what else about Global Witness we might need to update and evolve to reach our full potential. We began work on an organisational strategy that sets out pathways for where we want to get to by 2030.

This strategy covers campaigns but also five other areas too. These include how we show up in the world – the way we work with partners, as well as our public profile – and how we develop our people and establish ourselves as a go-to employer for inclusion and belonging. We want to improve our effectiveness through stronger systems and structures that befit a genuinely global organisation. We want growth that enables us to be financially sustainable and innovation that is founded on a supple and collaborative approach to responding to new opportunities and getting the best out of each other.

In 2023, we will add to this thinking based on what we have learned from our experiences in 2022.

**We look forward to working  
with you to build a Global  
Witness that is ever more  
adaptive, resilient, and set up to  
thrive in an era of global crises.  
Thank you for your support!**



# DISMANTLING THE POWER OF THE BIG POLLUTING FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY



---

The trio of crises – climate, energy, and Ukraine – all have one thing in common: they are driven and fed by fossil fuels. And yet despite the science being unequivocal in its condemnation of fossil fuels – the UN Secretary General calling the fossil fuel industry “the polluted heart of the climate crisis” – the transition to renewable energy has been slow and fossil fuel companies remain powerful. The two are not unconnected, as it is this power yielded by the industry that enables them to push back against climate action that would challenge their profits. Two new campaigns in 2022 from Global Witness put the fossil fuel industry under the scrutiny it deserves.

---

## THE UKRAINE PROJECT

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the big oil companies who spent decades building up the Kremlin's fossil fuel exports were quick to condemn the aggression. Over the next few weeks, the fossil fuel industry announced that its business as usual in Russia was over. TotalEnergies announced an end to new investments, commodity giants like Vitol said they would phase out Russian oil, and BP, Shell and Exxon promised to exit their enormous investments in the country altogether.

Yet as Global Witness investigations revealed, many companies were saying one thing, and doing another. The gap between their words and their actions has contributed to the Kremlin's ability to fund the war in Ukraine.

Two months into the war we demonstrated<sup>1</sup> that in the calendar month following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, three of the world's largest commodity traders – Vitol, Trafigura and Glencore – transported more oil from Russian ports than they had done in the same period over at least the last three years. After a wave of coverage, including a front-page story in the Financial Times<sup>2</sup>, Vitol finally committed to an end date for its trade of Russian oil.



Ukrainian activists hold a banner calling for a complete ban on the trade of Russian oil at the US Embassy in Kyiv, Ukraine. February 2023.

“

Since day one of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, Global Witness has stood alongside the people of Ukraine to demand an end to the huge fossil fuel revenues that have lined Putin's war chest. Our message has been clear: **every drop of oil that brings in money for Putin is Ukrainian blood.** Global Witness has understood this message and has worked tirelessly to expose the big oil companies that say they are with the people of Ukraine yet continue to do business with Putin.”

Oleg Ustenko — Chief Economic Adviser to President Zelenskyy

This kicked off a series of fast-paced investigations that showed the world that the fossil fuel industry was far from done with Russia. At the end of 2022, nearly 10 months after BP promised to sell its stake in Rosneft, Putin's oil company, Global Witness published analysis<sup>3</sup> showing that the British company is owed £580m this year in dividends from its Russian venture, effectively blood money made as a result of the war. The story caused outrage among MPs<sup>4</sup>, and former Labour Minister Margaret Hodge tabled a motion<sup>5</sup> condemning BP and secured an urgent question in parliament, where a cross-party group of MPs grilled a Treasury minister and pushed for the government to take action.

Working with Oleg Ustenko, President Zelenskyy's Chief Economic Adviser, we called out BP and Shell<sup>6</sup> for their hypocrisy as they continued purchases of fuels blended with Russian origin products. The Telegraph covered the call and following press coverage coordinated by Global Witness, BP and Shell both announced a reversal of their policy on blending, meaning they stopped purchasing fuel blended with Russian-origin products.

Russia will never again be a reliable supplier of energy. Oil and gas companies have sought to exploit the war to drag us all backwards, and this has demonstrated the clear link between fossil fuels and violence. The war in Ukraine is a moment when the climate movement must respond, holding up a mirror to a thoroughly broken and abusive global energy system.



### Spotlight: **TOTALENERGIES AND RUSSIAN GAS**

In August, we published an investigation<sup>7</sup> into TotalEnergies' Siberian gas production at Termokarstovoye, which Total maintained after the invasion on the grounds that it was required for European energy security. Our investigation, co-published with Le Monde<sup>8</sup>, revealed links between that production and Russian military attacks on Ukrainian civilians, which Total later denied.

Following a wave of media coverage, French politicians and a government minister called for official inquiries, and Total updated their response once<sup>9</sup> and a second time<sup>10</sup> in the space of two days as pressure mounted. On August 26, Total finally announced it was selling the Termokarstovoye field and its 49% stake in the associated company, TerNefteGaz. As a result, French MPs tabled an amendment which would have taxed TotalEnergies' Russian profits at 100% and committed them to the reconstruction of Ukraine, a proposal which narrowly failed by 8 votes<sup>11</sup>.

A coalition of NGOs subsequently filed a criminal complaint against Total<sup>12</sup> for alleged complicity in war crimes based on that investigation, with the National Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor's Office in Paris.

## FOSSIL FUELS NEWSROOM

As summer was drawing to a close, attention in Europe was turning to the prospect of a winter with skyrocketing energy bills that would plunge millions into poverty. The choice between heating and eating became a very real question. Yet the picture was far from bleak for big oil and gas companies like BP and Shell, who were raking in record profits throughout the course of 2022.

This prompted us to establish our Fossil Fuels Newsroom – a team geared to exposing the absurdity of a global energy system that benefits a small but powerful clique of oil companies, whilst keeping the rest of us dependent on oil and gas, even when their costs had become so unaffordable.

In October when British-based energy giant Shell announced its quarter 3 profits, we showed how their windfall profits in the previous 12 months could pay for the energy bills of 12.5 million British households, heat pumps for 2.1 million homes, or emergency shelter for all of the victims of Pakistan's climate crisis-caused floods<sup>13</sup>.

Building into 2023, the Newsroom continued to focus on the huge profits made by the likes of BP, Shell, TotalEnergies, Chevron and Exxon, using creative and public-facing campaigns to deliver a clear message that it is fossil fuels that have caused this energy crisis, and only moving to renewable energy can deliver us the real energy security people everywhere require for their daily lives.



We showed how Shell's windfall profits in the previous 12 months could pay for the energy bills of 12.5 million British households, heat pumps for 2.1 million homes, or emergency shelter for all of the victims of Pakistan's climate crisis-caused floods.

Protesters are demonstrating for a general election to take place in the UK following the repeated change of Conservative party leadership and therefore Prime Ministers. Westminster, London, on 5 November 2022.



## DISMANTLING THE POWER OF THE BIG POLLUTING FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY



### Spotlight:

## FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY AGAIN INFILTRATING COP27

Following on from our work with Corporate Europe Observatory and Corporate Accountability at COP26, we once again set out to put a number on the fossil fuel lobbyists attending the world's most important climate talks<sup>14</sup>. It showed:

# 1,070

More fossil fuel lobbyists than any single national delegation, besides the UAE who registered 1,070 delegates, compared to 176 at the previous COP



There are more fossil fuel lobbyists registered than representatives of the ten countries most impacted by climate change

These numbers underlined the extent to which these crucial climate talks are infiltrated by the industry that is overwhelmingly responsible for the climate crisis. The story made a huge splash, launching with the BBC<sup>15</sup> and hundreds of subsequent media stories. A number of follow-up stories emerged from the research, including the absurd revelation that Bernard Looney, CEO of BP, attended COP as an official delegate of the African state of Mauritania<sup>16</sup>.

# 25%

636 fossil fuel lobbyists registered at COP27, an increase of over 25% from COP26



Despite being the "African COP" there were more fossil fuel lobbyists registered than any national delegation from the African continent

“

For far too long the big polluters of the oil and gas industry have been able to operate freely without any real scrutiny over their destructive impact on the planet. The energy crisis, and the subsequent untold suffering for millions of families, lies directly at the door of this industry who have profited from our woes. It's therefore refreshing to work with an organisation like Global Witness in confronting this industry and exposing to the public that we cannot protect both people and planet until we confront the power and influence of fossil fuels.”

Jolyon Rubinstein, BAFTA winning comedian



Still from a video produced with Jolyon Rubinstein (UK comedian) about Shell's tax activities in the UK.

# PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE OF SOLVING THE CLIMATE CRISIS



---

The fight for the planet is also a fight for the people that inhabit it. The industries that are responsible for driving the climate crisis view people at best as cheap labour, at worst hindrances, and very often as irrelevancies. That is why dismantling polluter power must be replaced with a rise in people power. Not only because it is just and fair, not just for a more equal world, but because many of the solutions to the climate crisis lie with those who are already feeling its impacts and have been defending our planet for years.

---

## LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS



All over the world, in 2022, we saw the courage of people to fight for their livelihoods and landscapes placing them under threat, attack, and intimidation. In Brazil, the killings of Indigenous communities expert Bruno Pereira and journalist Dom Phillips, came against the backdrop of widespread attacks on Indigenous people during the final year of the Bolsonaro government.

But this is not just at the door of politicians and Brazilian companies. In September, we revealed how major international household names including Cargill, Hershey's, Kellogg, Nestlé and PepsiCo were sourcing palm oil linked to violent campaigns to silence Indigenous communities, fraudulent land grabs, and intimidation and harassment in the Brazilian state of Pará<sup>17</sup>. Encouragingly, in the weeks after we released these findings, a number of those companies told us they were suspending purchases from the Brazilian palm oil producers.

And it's not just in local communities where frontline voices are being silenced. Alongside partner NGOs and Egyptian civil society, we called out Egypt, as the COP27 host nation, over its worrying restrictions on freedom of expression and participation at the climate talks against activists, Indigenous communities and those who know the deadly impacts of the climate crisis best<sup>18</sup>. At COP27 itself we joined forces with a number of civil society groups to underline to states just how crucial and beneficial the role of land and environmental defenders can be in spaces like COP<sup>19</sup>. It was therefore great to see the UN Secretary General echo these sentiments in his opening speech<sup>20</sup> at COP27. The Prime Minister of Norway, meanwhile, instigated an emotional moment of silence to commemorate the deaths of defenders, specifically citing our most recently published report.

**Globally, one land  
and environmental defender  
was killed every two days  
since we started documenting  
killings in 2012.**

Doto Takak Ire, Indigenous leader of the Kayapó People in front of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples in Brasília, on 9 June 2023.



**Spotlight:**  
**A DECADE OF DEFIANCE**

In September 2022, Global Witness launched its tenth annual report documenting the number of land and environmental defenders killed each year. It revealed that 1,733 people have been killed during those ten years – representing one person every two days.

The data we and our partners gathered showed that over half of the attacks over the 10-year period have taken place in Brazil, Colombia, and the Philippines. In 2021, Mexico was the country with the highest recorded number of killings. Over three-quarters of the attacks we documented in 2021 took place in Latin America. Our research also highlighted how Indigenous communities face a disproportionate level of attacks – nearly 40% – even though they make up only 5% of the world’s population.

Just days after the report showed Colombia to be one of the most dangerous countries for defenders, its government took the promising steps of ratifying the Escazú Agreement<sup>21</sup>. The Agreement is the first regional environmental and human rights treaty in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the first legally-binding instrument in the world to require governments to prevent and investigate attacks against environmental defenders. We and our partners will be watching to ensure Colombia matches the pledge with concrete action.

José Cuero's living room at his ranch in Juntas de Nejí.



“Global Witness has high credibility in Colombia, and its reports have become a fundamental tool to amplify our messages. You are also very strong with international media and have access to civil society, governments, and other decision-makers at the regional level, which we can use more proactively.”

Somos Defensores (Colombia)

Throughout the course of the year, Global Witness continued to work with MEPs, civil society and others to fight for this law to finally hold corporates to account.



**Spotlight:**

## **HOLDING CORPORATES TO ACCOUNT FOR HARMING PEOPLE AND PLANET**

For more than three years, Global Witness, alongside partners, has been campaigning for the introduction of a law that could force companies to act on abuse against the environment and people taking place in their supply chains.

In early 2022, the European Commission finally put forward its proposals, to which we responded with our own version of what a successful law would look like<sup>22</sup>. Throughout the course of the year, we continued to work with MEPs, civil society, and others to fight for this law to be as strong as possible in finally holding corporates to account.

Whilst there were worrying moves late in the year by Member States to block key parts of the legislation **\*\*spoiler alert for 2023\*\*** as final negotiations are set to take place, the European Parliament has adopted a strong position that we hope will drive forward the legislation needed to bring about much needed corporate accountability.

## NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

The global drive towards a necessary energy transition has precipitated a rush to obtain the critical minerals required to power it. This scramble for minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and “rare earth” metals that are used in everything from batteries to solar panels carries risks for communities in the Global South. And this also presents an opportunity to end the exploitative and destructive practices of mining to date and place people first.

In April, we published The ITSCI Laundromat, a major investigation into serious failures in an industry-led initiative called International Tin Supply Chain Initiative (ITSCI) that is supposed to prevent conflict-financing and human rights abuses linked with tin, tantalum, and tungsten in Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>23</sup>.

The investigation found evidence of large quantities of minerals connected to armed conflict and child labour, as well as smuggled or trafficked minerals, being laundered through ITSCI's supply chains. In response, the Responsible Minerals Initiative (RMI), the most widely used industry scheme for smelters of tin, tantalum, and tungsten, decided to remove ITSCI from its list of approved upstream assurance mechanisms<sup>24</sup>. The decision sends a strong signal that industry has serious concerns with ITSCI, something which we hope will lead to the scheme being reformed.



### Spotlight: **MYANMAR'S POISONED MOUNTAINS**

Our Poisoned Mountains<sup>25</sup> report used cutting-edge analysis of satellite imagery to document a massive expansion of illegal rare earth mines in northern Myanmar. Our investigation showed how this mining boom has led to the poisoning of surrounding land and waterways, seizure of communities, and decimation of wildlife. The mining is enriching a Myanmar junta-aligned warlord whose militias threaten those that dare to speak out.

The investigation sparked debate amongst industry bodies and we briefed officials in the US State Department, UK Foreign Office and China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment on our findings. An ethics advisory board to a major global pension fund launched a review of a Chinese manufacturer in the rare earth's supply chain.

Our research prompted multiple companies to re-examine the supply chain of their battery products and has given activist investor groups and environmental organisations new information with which to lobby companies involved in the rare earth's supply chain.

“

African and many other Global South countries have not benefited from the industrial revolution and more recent economic transformations. We don't want to miss out in the energy transition too. That is why it is important to change the paradigm which considers Africa as a reservoir of raw materials that can be exploited to the detriment of the people instead of furthering their development by adding value on the ground and building sustainable supply chains. AFREWATCH welcomes its continued partnership with Global Witness to push for better regulation and hold those to account who place the rush for transition minerals above equity.”

**Emmanuel Umpula,**  
Executive Director of African Natural Resources Watch / AFREWATCH



# TACKLING THE FINANCIERS BANKING ON DEFORESTATION



---

**Irresponsible businesses including financial institutions are driving the destruction of climate-critical tropical forests, and the communities and biodiversity that rely on them. We are campaigning to end the flow of money to reckless businesses – particularly damaging agribusinesses enabling this deforestation.**

---

## PROTECTING OUR FORESTS

Our investigations and stories in 2022 helped expose many of the businesses that are contributing to the degradation of the world's forests. In June, our investigation revealed that industrial rubber plantations in West and Central Africa have been linked to an area of tropical deforestation 16 times the size of Brussels since 2000. It showed how major banks in the EU provided over €1.5bn in financing to multinationals linked to rubber-driven deforestation in the region.



### Spotlight:

## EU DEFORESTATION LAW A HUGE STEP FORWARD

Throughout 2022, we used the evidence from our investigations to campaign in Brussels, with an array of partners, for a strong anti-deforestation law that could offer a major step towards deforestation-free supply chains in the EU. In December, that hard work paid off as the EU sealed an agreement on the law, to be signed in 2023 and come into effect shortly after<sup>29</sup>.

Although ambitious, we had consistently argued for including the financial sector in this legislation. It was therefore encouraging that

And later that same month, another Global Witness investigation showed how banks and financiers in the Global North had backed Brazilian beef giant JBS to the tune of almost \$1 billion, despite the company's links to widespread deforestation, land grabbing, and slave labour in the Amazon<sup>26</sup>.

As COP27 was taking place in November, we revealed that financial institutions that had joined a net-zero pledge, known as "GFANZ" at COP26, were still investing \$8.5 billion in companies at risk of causing deforestation<sup>27</sup>.

Our final forests investigation of 2022 attempted to take this debate one step further. What happens when a company sells off assets linked to deforestation and human rights abuses, without trying to rectify the problem? That's exactly what we found in the case of Brookfield Asset Management, headed up by the UN Special Envoy for Climate Action, Mark Carney<sup>28</sup>.

our allies in the European Parliament, using our evidence, were able to negotiate a review clause that requires the Commission to review the role of EU financiers in deforestation within the next two years.

A disappointing outcome of the negotiations was the failure to agree meaningful new protections for Indigenous Peoples. Moves to require companies to respect international human rights law did not make it into the agreement. We will be monitoring the law's implementation to make sure that when these rules are broken it results in dissuasive penalties that companies simply cannot factor into their costs of doing business.

“

We must do everything we can to stop deforestation, because we cannot survive in nature-depleted chaos. What is good for forests is good for the global economy and governments in financial centres like the City of London should prevent lenders from ploughing billions into deforesting companies. That is why I worked with Global Witness to push through vital changes to the Financial Services and Markets Act, a “once in a generation” change to financial regulation in the UK.

Global Witness's investigations and savvy campaign [were] integral to our winning vote in the House of Lords to introduce a new due diligence law, which provides the Treasury with a blueprint for how to stop UK finance driving deforestation and illegal land grabs against Indigenous Peoples as they move forward with a new review on this topic.”

Baroness Boycott,  
Crossbench peer in the UK House of Lords





# FIGHTING BIG TECH'S DISTORTION OF ONLINE SPACES



---

Social media has brought people closer together and made the world smaller. Yet it remains dominated by a few powerful companies whose profit-driven business model is incentivising and monetising hatred, fear, disinformation and abuse.

---

# COMBATTING ONLINE DISINFORMATION

Our Digital Threats Team spent 2022 exposing the role of big social media platforms in sowing such hatred and disinformation that always has very real-life consequences. In Ethiopia<sup>30</sup> and Kenya<sup>31</sup>, we showed how Facebook was allowing hate speech to be approved for publication on its site, marking the beginning of our series of stress-testing social media's ability to detect and stamp out problematic content.

Ahead of, during, and after tense presidential elections in Brazil, we found Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube failing to prevent disinformation and violent hate being spread on their platforms<sup>32</sup>. Working with the Cybersecurity for Democracy Team at New York University, we also found Facebook and TikTok failing to block deceptive ads with blatant disinformation about the US midterms<sup>33</sup>. In a separate test on death threats being made against polling station workers during the midterms, TikTok and YouTube fared better, but Facebook was still failing to meet its responsibilities on stopping violent hate.

In Europe, Global Witness campaigning, within a wider coalition, contributed to the passing of the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA); a new law that brought in the most sweeping regulation of tech companies anywhere in the world. The DSA navigates a thorny line between protecting people's free speech online and tackling illegal content, rights abuses, and social harms – including growing issues such as viral disinformation and electoral interference. It finally offers a way to systematically lift the lid on the inner workings of the biggest tech companies that play an increasingly dominant role in how we experience the world.

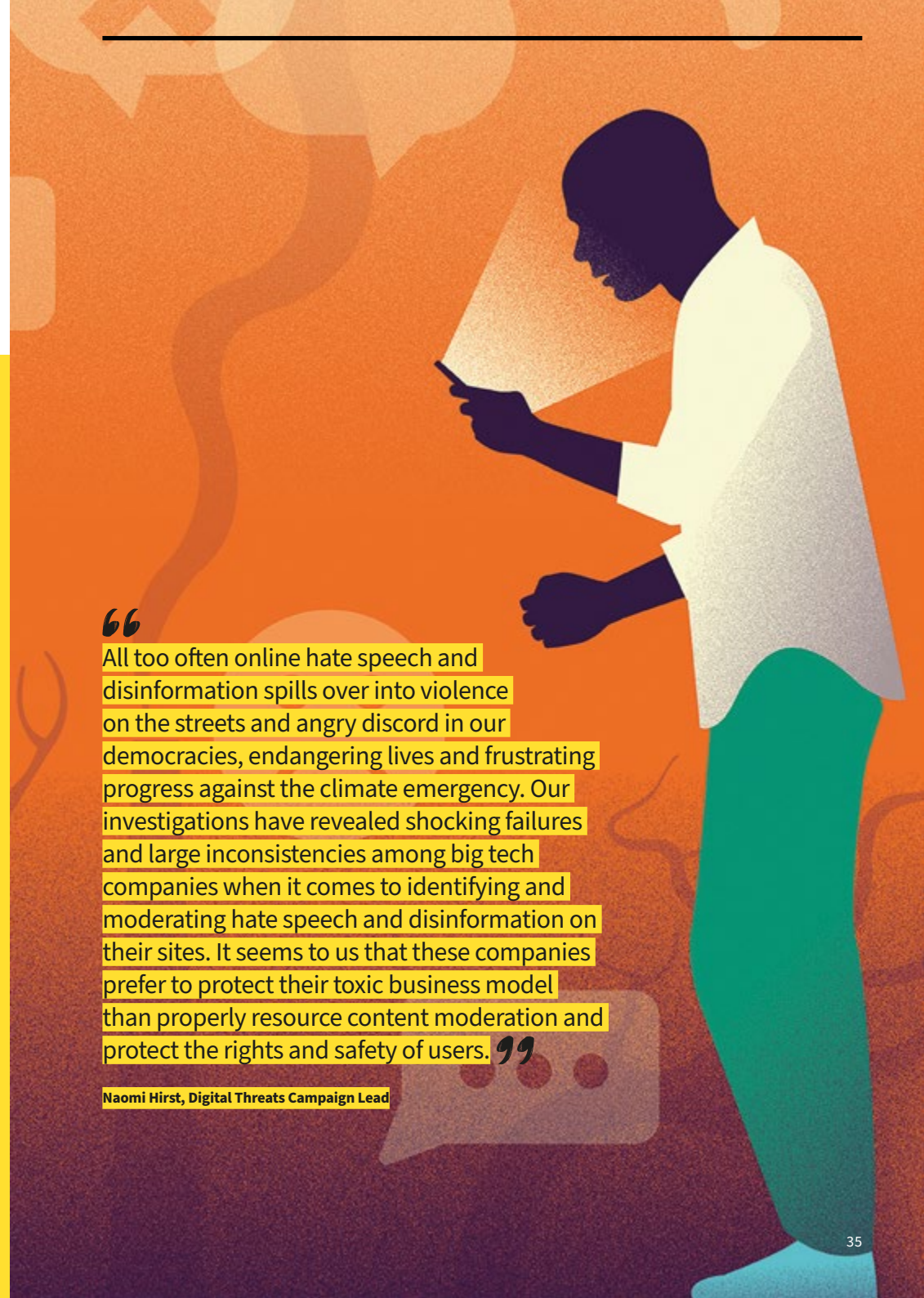


## Spotlight: **SOCIAL MEDIA AND CLIMATE DISINFORMATION**

Our investigation in March 2022 revealed how Facebook can lead users down a rabbit hole of climate denial and misinformation, eventually leading to outright conspiracy theories<sup>34</sup>. We simulated the user experience of an individual liking pages such as “Net Zero Watch”, an organisation countering climate policy and linked to the UK Conservative MP Steve Baker. We found that immediately after liking this page, the user was recommended “Climate Depot”, a US-based outlet run by Marc Morano and part of CFACT, a group that calls human-induced climate change “a myth”.

In an overwhelming majority of cases, a similar pattern continued throughout the simulation leading the user to see content that includes the myth that climate change is a hoax, that describes the UN as an “authoritarian regime” that has less credibility than “Bugs Bunny”, and accuses the “green movement” of “enslaving humanity”. As the simulation went deeper, Facebook began to recommend other conspiracies, such as the chemtrails theory which claims that condensation left by planes contains chemical agents that control the weather.

These findings fly in the face of the commitment Facebook has said it has to promoting genuine climate science.



“

All too often online hate speech and disinformation spills over into violence on the streets and angry discord in our democracies, endangering lives and frustrating progress against the climate emergency. Our investigations have revealed shocking failures and large inconsistencies among big tech companies when it comes to identifying and moderating hate speech and disinformation on their sites. It seems to us that these companies prefer to protect their toxic business model than properly resource content moderation and protect the rights and safety of users.”

Naomi Hirst, Digital Threats Campaign Lead

# OUR PARTNERS

**Global Witness has a long and proud history of working in partnership – not just in our investigations and advocacy, but across the organisation. In fact, it would be difficult to provide examples of an impact we’ve had that hasn’t involved collaboration and partnerships.**

From working in coalition with other NGOs in Brussels to achieve breakthroughs on deforestation legislation, to documenting killings and reprisals against land and environmental defenders in Latin America thanks to reporting and monitoring by civil society partners across the continent; From working with local CSOs on the ground in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to expose failures in mineral supply chains, to jointly analysing COP delegate lists to reveal how many fossil fuel lobbyists attend the climate conference every year, our partners make our work possible.

Indeed, our ability to achieve our vision to end climate breakdown by 2030 is reliant on working with others. Given this importance, and as part of our organisational commitment to continual learning and reflection, a key Global Witness priority for 2023 is to review how we work in partnership, so we can ensure that we are consistently demonstrating that what we say is what we actually mean and do.

Global Witness looks forward to continuing to collaborate with our partners across our campaigns and the wider organisation, learning from others’ knowledge and sharing our own expertise, as we work together to shift the balance of power from those most benefiting from the climate crisis to those most disproportionately impacted.

# OUR SUPPORTERS

**Global Witness appreciates all of our donors who make our work possible. With thanks to:**

Aber D. Unger Foundation	Luminate
Arcadia	Michael Hokenson
Arcus Foundation	The Minor Foundation for Major Challenge
Brook Foundation	Nationale Postcode Lotterij
Camille Massey	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)
CHARISMA Stiftung für nachhaltige Entwicklung	Oliver Hudson
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland	Patagonia.com
Don Quixote II Foundation	Postcode Justice Trust, supported by players of People’s Postcode Lottery
European Climate Foundation	Quadrature Climate Foundation
FCDO - Forests, Governance, Markets and Climate Programme	Schaffner Family Foundation
FJC – A Foundation of Philanthropic Funds	Silicon Valley Community Fund
Flora Family Foundation	Skoll Foundation
Ford Foundation	Swedish Postcode Foundation
The Foundation to Promote Open Society	Taylor Foundation
The Frederick Mulder Foundation	The Thomas E. Brown Charitable Fund
Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment	Tilia Fund
Hopewell Fund	The Trellis Charitable Trust
Humanity United Action	The Waterloo Foundation
The Isocrates Foundation	Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
Jane Thurnell-Read	The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Jocarno Fund	WYR Foundation
Kenneth Miller Trust	
The Kestrelman Trust	
Laudes Foundation	

This represents donors who have given their consent to have their gift acknowledged in our Annual Report.

## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

### Income by source

	2022 £'000	2022 %	2021 £'000	2021 %
Governments	1,189	11%	940	9%
Trusts and Foundations	8,653	81%	8,526	84%
Individuals	833	8%	591	6%
Other NGOs and Multilaterals	29	0%	11	0%
Donated services and facilities	27	0%	61	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,731</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10,129</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Expenditure

	2022 £'000	2022 %	2021 £'000	2021 %
Campaigns	7,609	74%	6,647	74%
Indirect costs and governance	1,203	12%	1,192	13%
Cost of raising funds	1,418	14%	1,193	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,230</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9,032</b>	<b>100%</b>

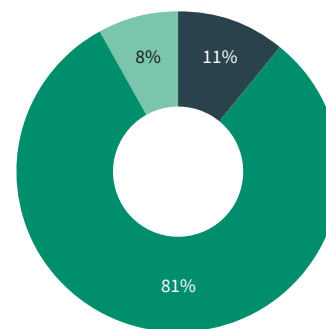
### By campaign

	2022 £'000	2022 %	2021 £'000	2021 %
Environmental and human rights research and campaigning				
Forests	2,297	27%	2,345	30%
Land and Environmental Defenders	1,830	21%	1,383	18%
Gas	2,208	25%	1,453	19%
Corporate Accountability	649	7%	829	10%
Digital Threats	824	9%	667	8%
Strengthen Natural Resource Governance	1,004	11%	1,162	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,812</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,839</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above summarised financial statements are extracted from the full statutory directors' annual report and financial statements which were approved by the directors and signed on their behalf on 2 May 2023.

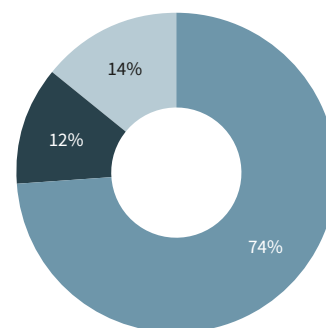
These summarised financial statements may not contain sufficient information to gain a complete understanding of the financial affairs of Global Witness. The full statutory directors' report, financial statements, and auditor's report may be obtained from <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/about-us/financial-statements/>

### Income by source



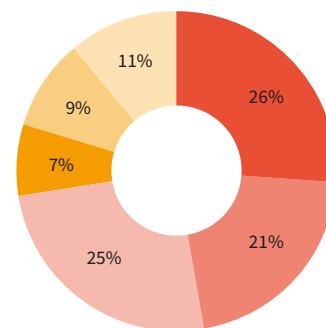
● Governments	11%
● Trusts and Foundations	81%
● Individuals	8%
○ Other NGOs and Multilaterals	0%
○ Donated services and facilities	0%

### Expenditure



● Campaigns	74%
● Indirect costs and governance	12%
● Cost of raising funds	14%

### By campaign



● Forests	26%
● Land and Environmental Defenders	21%
● Gas	25%
● Corporate accountability	7%
● Digital threats	9%
● Strengthen natural resource governance	11%






## ENDNOTES

- 1 Busy March at Russian ports for some of the world's biggest oil traders, Global Witness, 11 April 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/stop-russian-oil/busy-march-at-russian-ports-for-some-of-the-worlds-biggest-oil-traders/>
- 2 Ukraine calls on commodity traders to stop handling Russian oil, Financial Times, 10 April 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/ff9208bd-182e-439b-885e-ee6bf2c89e8e>
- 3 What BP could do with its £580m wartime Russian oil profits, Global Witness, 2 December 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/stop-russian-oil/what-bp-could-do-with-its-580m-wartime-russian-oil-profits/>
- 4 UK Parliament, BP Dividends, EDM (Early Day Motion) 669, tabled on 05 December 2022 <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/60382>
- 5 Idem
- 6 Millard R, Ukraine urges Johnson to ensure 'not a drop' of Russian oil reaches the UK, The Telegraph, 24 April 2022 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/04/24/ukraine-urges-johnson-ensure-not-drop-russian-oil-reaches-uk/>
- 7 French cash, Russian fuel, Ukrainian blood, Global Witness, 24 August 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/stop-russian-oil/total-russian-jet-fuel/>
- 8 Grynszpan E. and Bouissou, I., Le Monde, 25 August 2022 How TotalEnergies fuels Russian fighter jets in Ukraine, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/08/25/how-french-oil-giant-totalenergies-fuels-russian-fighter-jets-in-ukraine\\_5994692\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/08/25/how-french-oil-giant-totalenergies-fuels-russian-fighter-jets-in-ukraine_5994692_4.html)
- 9 No, TotalEnergies Does Not Produce Kerosene for the Russian Army, TotalEnergies, 24 August 2022, <https://totalenergies.com/media/news/press-releases/no-totalenergies-does-not-produce-kerosene-russian-army>
- 10 Follow-up on the reaction from TotalEnergies after the publication of an article in French daily newspaper Le Monde, TotalEnergies, 26 August 2022 <https://totalenergies.com/media/news/press-releases/Follow-up-on-the-reaction-from-TotalEnergies>
- 11 LPC « L'amendement du groupe @socialistesAN est finalement rejeté par 157 voix contre 149 » 17 October, 2022 <https://twitter.com/LCP/status/1582133247005237250?s=20&t=ntbkrJHDOaen8UIGeVeZa>
- 12 J Bouissou, Le Monde, 14 October 2022, Guerre en Ukraine : TotalEnergies, accusé d'avoir fourni du carburant aux avions russes, est visé par une plainte pour « complicité de crimes de guerre » [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2022/10/14/guerre-en-ukraine-accuse-d-avoir-fourni-du-carburant-aux-avions-russes-totalenergies-est-visee-par-une-plainte-pour-complicite-de-crime-de-guerre\\_6145728\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2022/10/14/guerre-en-ukraine-accuse-d-avoir-fourni-du-carburant-aux-avions-russes-totalenergies-est-visee-par-une-plainte-pour-complicite-de-crime-de-guerre_6145728_3210.html)
- 13 Energy giant Shell has already made £31bn in excess profits over past year, Global Witness, 27 October 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/energy-giant-shell-has-already-made-31bn-in-excess-profits-over-past-year/>
- 14 636 fossil fuel lobbyists granted access to COP27, Global Witness, 10 November 2022, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/fossil-gas/636-fossil-fuel-lobbyists-granted-access-cop27/>
- 15 COP27: Sharp rise in fossil fuel industry delegates at climate summit, BBC, 10 November 2022 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-63571610>
- 16 COP27: BP chief listed as delegate for Mauritania, BBC, 10 November 2022 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-63584993>
- 17 Amazon Palm, Global Witness, 26 September 2022, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/amazon-palm/>
- 18 Egypt: Statements on COP27 imply restricting activism, Global Witness 21 July 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/egypt-statements-cop27-imply-restricting-activism/>
- 19 COP27: Human rights advocates urge parties to increase recognition and protection of environmental and land defenders, Global Witness, 3 November 2022, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/cop27-human-rights-advocates-urge-parties-increase-recognition-and-protection-environmental-and-land-defenders/>
- 20 Secretary-General's opening remarks at press encounter on Pre-COP27, United Nations Secretary General Office, 3 October 2022 <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-10-03/secretary-generals-opening-remarks-press-encounter-pre-cop27>
- 21 Global Witness welcomes Colombia ratifying key agreement for protection of land and environment defenders after 322 killed in Colombia in the last decade, Global Witness, 11 October 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/global-witness-welcomes-colombia-ratifying-key-agreement-protection-land-and-environment-defenders-after-322-killed-colombia-last-decade/>
- 22 Can the EU hold companies to account? Global Witness, 4 April 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/holding-corporates-account/can-eu-hold-companies-account/>
- 23 The ITSCI laundromat, Global Witness, 26 April 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/natural-resource-governance/itsci-laundromat/>
- 24 RMI Upstream Mechanism Recognition Update, Responsive Minerals Initiative, 31 October 2022 <https://www.responsiblemineralsinitiative.org/news/rmi-upstream-mechanism-recognition-update/>
- 25 Poisoned Mountains, Global Witness, 9 August 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/natural-resource-governance/myanmars-poisoned-mountains/>
- 26 Cash Cow: How beef giant JBS's links to Amazon deforestation and human rights abuses are aided by UK, US and EU financiers, importers and supermarkets, Global Witness, 23 June 2022, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/forests/cash-cow/>
- 27 Zero Progress? One year on from COP26, GFANZ investors remain heavily exposed to deforestation, Global Witness, 9 November 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/forests/zero-progress-one-year-cop26-gfanz-investors-remain-heavily-exposed-deforestation/>
- 28 Slash and sell: How financial giant Brookfield and its big bank backers profited from deforestation and the abuse of Indigenous peoples' rights in Brazil, Global Witness, 8 November 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/forests/slash-and-sell/>
- 29 "A historic moment in the struggle to stop deforestation": EU agrees anti-deforestation law, putting bloc on the pathway to regulating financial sector. Global Witness, 6 December 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/a-historic-moment-in-the-struggle-to-stop-deforestation-eu-agrees-anti-deforestation-law-putting-bloc-on-the-pathway-to-regulating-financial-sector/>
- 30 'Now is the time to kill': Facebook continues to approve hate speech inciting violence and genocide during civil war in Ethiopia. Global Witness, 9 June 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/digital-threats/ethiopia-hate-speech/>
- 31 Facebook unable to detect hate speech weeks away from tight Kenyan election, Global Witness, 28 July 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/digital-threats/hate-speech-kenyan-election/>
- 32 Facebook fails to tackle election disinformation ads ahead of tense Brazilian election, Global Witness, 15 August 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/digital-threats/facebook-fails-tackle-election-disinformation-ads-ahead-tense-brazilian-election/>
- 33 TikTok and Facebook fail to detect election disinformation in the US, while YouTube succeeds. Global Witness, 21 October 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/digital-threats/tiktok-and-facebook-fail-detect-election-disinformation-us-while-youtube-succeeds/>
- 34 The climate divide: How Facebook's algorithm amplifies climate disinformation. Global Witness, 28 March 2022 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/digital-threats/climate-divide-how-facebooks-algorithm-amplifies-climate-disinformation/>

---

## FOLLOW OUR LATEST ACTION

---

-  [facebook.com/GlobalWitness](https://facebook.com/GlobalWitness)
-  [twitter.com/Global\\_Witness](https://twitter.com/Global_Witness)
-  [instagram.com/global\\_witness](https://instagram.com/global_witness)
-  [linkedin.com/company/global-witness](https://linkedin.com/company/global-witness)
-  [youtube.com/globalwitness](https://youtube.com/globalwitness)

Photography by Jasmin Qureshi (Global Witness), Dan Pearson (Alamy Stock Photo), Anna Soshnikova (Global Witness), Avpics (Alamy Stock Photo), Basilio Sepe (Global Witness), Cícero Pedrosa Neto (Global Witness), Felipe Luna (Global Witness), Alessio Bariviera (Global Witness), creativecommons.org, Kenzo Tribouillard/AFP (Getty Images), Markus Spiske (Unsplash). Illustration by Sébastien Thibault (Global Witness), Neil Webb (Global Witness)



# FIND THE FACTS EXPOSE THE STORY CHANGE THE SYSTEM

Challenging abuses of power to protect human rights and secure the future of our planet.

[globalwitness.org](https://globalwitness.org)

---

ISBN: 978-1-911606-72-7

Published: September 2023

Global Witness is a company limited by guarantee and incorporated in England (No.2871809).

© Global Witness 2023

global witness

