

Europe to see anti-tourism rallies Sunday

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: This Sunday (June 15), will see residents in several prominent tourist destination across Europe rise in protest against mass tourism, with many cities organising 'water pistols protests' to try to assert their opposition to overtourism which plagues these cities.

Leading the protests is a Spanish group based in Barcelona, the Assembly of Neighbourhoods for Tourist Degrowth (ABDT) which has called for a new demonstration under the slogan: 'Tourism robs us bread, roof and future: we defend the city, tourist degrowth NOW!.

In a press conference organised earlier this month, the leaders of ABDT said that the planned march will go through the city centre with the aim of denouncing what they said was "structural touristisation" saying that it was not only tourist overcrowding, but the way in which Barcelona has been put at the service of the tourist monoculture, to the detriment of neighborhood welfare and access to basic rights such as housing.

Among other associations that have joined in the protest are tourism workers' unions and environmental groups such as Ecologistas en Acción who warn that the media attention focused on the number of visitors diverts the focus from the economic benefits that tourism generates for a few, at the expense of expelling residents from their neighborhoods and making life in the city more expensive.

As a symbol of peaceful protest, the organisers invite attendees to come with water pistols and toys, a direct reference to the first anti-mass tourism demonstration or to the action last year when activists gathered in front of the Sagrada Familia where they shot water at tourist buses as a sign of protest.

The call in Barcelona is part of a day of statewide mobilisation, with simultaneous protests planned in San Sebastian, Palma and Ibiza, where tourism also generates strong social and environmental tensions.

In traditionally popular destinations across the Balearic Islands, mainland Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece, organisers from over 70 groups are uniting as the Southern Europe Network Against Touristification, to encourage protesters to "disrupt the tourist normality."

Campaigners in the north of the region, in the Netherlands and even the United Kingdom are also said to be taking part. Amsterdam has been battling overtourism with campaigns to keep certain types of visitors away. Portuguese activists have also promised to join the fray in Lisbon.

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