

AZOH: Azeri Turks called for the preservation of Iran's saltwater Lake Urmia through a peaceful protest that included pouring salt and lying on the street in front of the Iranian Embassy in Ankara.

The environmental activists met in Kuşulu Park and, carrying banners with slogans like "The river gives life, parliament orders its death," they marched toward the Iranian Embassy.

Stating that Lake Urmia had the highest salt density of any lake in the world, protestor Afşar Abbasi made a press statement on behalf of the activists, saying, "According to the Iranian regime's own officials, 60 percent of Lake Urmia will dry up by next fall."

As a result of the lake drying up, Abbasi said that it will turn into a salt reservoir and paralyze the area's ecosystem, including livestock, agriculture and the lives of 13 million people.

Three people died, dozens were injured and 700 others were detained on Aug. 27 when the Iranian security forces reacted violently to activists in Iran's Tabriz and Urmia, Abbasi said.

After the speeches, the activists lay on the asphalt in front of the Iranian Embassy to protest the Iranian government's stance. To demonstrate that there will be no life in the area if the lake dries up, the

protestors spread salt on the ground before lying on it.

The protest was carried out peacefully. Last Saturday clashes broke out between environmental activists and Iranian security forces in Urmia and Tabriz in northwest Iran. According to news reports, security forces attacked tens of thousands of activists with pepper spray and rubber bullets in both cities.

This is the second round of protests in support of the Middle East's biggest lake in the Iranian provinces of East Azerbaijan and West Azerbaijan in less than a week.

The protests began on Aug. 27 after Iranian lawmakers voted down allocating funds to channel water from the Araz River to alleviate the drying up of Lake Urmia. Parliament incurred the wrath of even more Iranians when it proposed relocating residents who live near the lake.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-255721-azeri-turks-in-ankara-protest-lake-urmia-drying-up.html>

