



Our coal, their homes

Anne Harris reports on the people being made homeless because of mining to feed the UK's coal-fired power stations

Forced out in Russia

Rocks fall from the sky and dust coats houses, gardens and streams. Homes crack, sacred sites are destroyed and the wildlife is driven away. This was the reality for the residents of Kazas, a village of predominantly indigenous Shor people living in the shadow of enormous open-cast coal mines deep in the Keremovo Oblast, Siberia. Kazas was destroyed in 2013 and at least eight other villages have met the same fate.

Mining companies wanted the village and its inhabitants gone so that they could extract the rich coal seams underneath. Checkpoints controlled the village, restricting movement. The spirituality of the Shor people has been totally disregarded, with the sacred Karagay-nash mountain being desecrated and destroyed by mining.

Life in Kazas was made unbearable for the residents and when most agreed to move, the companies claimed that they did so voluntarily. For those who didn't consent to leave, the situation became more threatening. The director of a subsidiary of Sibuglemet said, 'If they don't sell their houses and estates to Yuzhnaya, then the houses might burn down.'

Within a month of threats being made, arson attacks began on the houses of the families who had refused to leave. The crimes have never been investigated.

The UK imports more coal from Russia than from any other country. Our electricity demand causes their suffering.