

# UAE-led operation deals serious blow to transnational environmental crime, with \$32 million worth of items seized

ABU DHABI , UAE, July 8, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A regional law enforcement operation named 'Green Justice', which was coordinated by the International Initiative of Law Enforcement for Climate (I2LEC), has uncovered vast environmental crimes in the Amazon Basin.

The operation dealt a serious blow to organised crime groups, seizing 2.4 tonnes of items related to illegal wildlife and marine catches, 37 illegal fishing equipment, 229 illegal mining equipment, and more than 10,498 cubic metres of illicitly cut wood. 25 suspects were arrested and charged with various environmental crimes. The illicit goods seized are estimated to be worth more than US\$32 million.

Operation Green Justice saw the support and participation of law enforcement agencies from Brazil, Peru, and Colombia, along with UNODC and the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). The primary objective was to target the regional network of environmental criminal activities in the Amazon Basin.

The joint operation, carried out between 24th to 30th June 2024 and coordinated by I2LEC one of the initiatives of the UAE Ministry of Interior, generated intelligence enabling thorough investigations into transnational environmental crime networks. Located in the heart of the Amazon forest at the intersection of Colombia, Peru, and Brazil, the three-way border passage has been a hotspot for criminal activity, including the smuggling of illicit goods, wildlife poaching, deforestation, and illegal mining.

Operation Green Justice also resulted in the seizure of various smuggling materials used in carrying out these environmental crimes.

Lt. Colonel Dana Almarzooqi, Director-General of the International Affairs Bureau, UAE Ministry of Interior, and Coordinator of I2LEC, commented, "In line with the wise leadership's keenness to preserve the environment and environmental wealth, under the leadership of President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and his great support for the initiative, and the commitment of H.H. Lt. General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, was keen to combat environmental crimes by implementing international training and operations in the field of the environment under the umbrella of I2LEC. Since its founding in 2023, I2LEC has grown into a truly international collaborative initiative capable of bringing the desired real change in the field of environmental protection in

the world. As the initiative's coordinator, I feel proud to witness the realisation of our vision on the ground, which has been embodied in a coordinated global response to environmental crimes and its participation at COP events, holding dozens of trainings. I2LEC is serious about its work to support future operations and empower law enforcement agencies around the world to protect their precious natural resources. In addition, the results obtained in the Green Justice operation have been added to a heat map of environmental crimes and the results will be analysed using artificial intelligence. It is worth noting that the environmental crimes that were monitored are considered among the major crimes linked to other crimes, such as money laundering."

Fabio Mertens, Brazil's Commissioner of Federal Police and Deputy Director of International Cooperation, said, "The positive impact of Operation Green Justice in combating environmental crimes in the Amazon is invaluable. Beyond the extraordinary repressive results, the coordinated efforts among Brazil, Peru, Colombia, and the United Arab Emirates, under the leadership of the I2LEC, represent a significant milestone in terms of environmental preservation and deterrence of illegal activities in the region. We are confident that the success of Operation Green Justice marks the beginning of a long-term set of operational activities targeting transnational environmental crimes in the Amazon Basin."

General Gregorio Martin Villalon Trillo, Head of the Environmental Directorate at the National Police of Peru, added, "I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the dedicated law enforcement operatives whose tireless efforts made Operation Green Justice possible. Under I2LEC's leadership, their professionalism and operational efficiency resulted in extraordinary success. Such actions mark the initial steps in our enduring commitment to safeguarding the Amazon. Initiatives like this reaffirm our dedication to preserving our planet's invaluable natural treasures and charting a course towards a more sustainable future."

Brigadier William Castano from Colombia, Director of the Gendarmerie police environmental protection department, added, "Operation Green Justice is a testament to the power of international collaboration in addressing urgent environmental challenges. Colombia is proud to have played an important part in stopping criminal activities at one of the busiest border crossings in the Amazon Basin. Thanks to I2LEC's vision and coordination, we have taken a significant step forward in raising environmental protection in the three-way border passage threatened by local criminal networks for years."

More seizures of illicit items and arrests are expected as part of ongoing investigations and coordination between various participants of the operation. This marks the beginning of a long-term global endeavour to combat environmental crimes in some of the world's most vital ecological arteries.

The International Initiative of Law Enforcement for Climate (I2LEC), launched in 2023 and co-led by the UAE Ministry of Interior in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), is a global platform aimed at awareness-raising, capacity-building, and research concerning crimes affecting the environment and climate change.

Press Office  
I2LEC  
[email us here](#)

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