

"Total madness": Fishers protest against ocean drilling

By [Joseph Chirume](#)

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About 30 activists and fishers led by the Eastern Cape Environmental Network and Earthlife Africa protested outside TotalEnergies service station in KwaDwesi, Gqeberha on Wednesday. They do not want the government to grant the company a license for the production of oil and gas between Mossel Bay and Cape St Francis.



Members of Earthlife Africa and the Eastern Cape Environmental Network protested on Wednesday outside TotalEnergies service station in KwaDwesi, Gqeberha. Photo: Joseph Chirume/GroundUp

The protest started at the Total service station at Ziyabuya mall. The protesters sang and handed out pamphlets, also to passing motorists on the R75. Large banners read: "Gas production along our coast. Total madness" and "Hamba Voetsek".

In a media statement they called on Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries Barbara Creecy to use her powers to stop Total and insist on a full risk assessment of the impact on marine life.

They said that where production and exploratory wells are to be drilled there are seven marine protected areas, the Port Elizabeth corals and Southwest Indian Seamounts, spawning grounds of fish such as kingklip, and well-known migration routes for whales and turtles. The area is also home to deep coral reefs that are important nurseries for young fish.



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Melikaya Blani, of the Eastern Cape Environment Forum, said drilling would negatively affect fishers and people who depend on the ocean for survival.

“There are no jobs to be created for our people simply because TotalEnergies will bring highly experienced employees. Oil rigs use skilled people. People in our communities will be left in the cold because they do not have the skills to work there,” said Blani.

Nomonde Botomani, of Missionvale, said, “My husband earns his money from fishing squid and chokka. Though their catch has remarkably depleted due to climate change and poaching, allowing for oil and gas drilling will be the final straw in our lives.”

A response from Total will be added when received.

This article was [originally published](#) on [GroundUp](#).

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