

Tsunami



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Tsunami Suffering: Just a whim of Nature? What role did human activities play in the disaster?

The earthquake on 26 December 2004 killed more than 250,000 people in eleven countries, one third were children. The World Health Organization was right in assuming that the number of victims after the event rose due to a lack of clean drinking water, food and medicines. Millions of people were homeless. A fatalistic way of looking at the catastrophe might be that nature follows its own rules that are as mysterious as they are uncontrollable. Is that correct? Are we people really innocent? Do we not play a part in such unspeakable misery?

Jeff McNeely, a scientist at the [World Conservation Union](#) [2] (IUCN), says we are complicit in this terrible situation:

- For a long time, mangrove forests have been destroyed to make room for shrimp farms that export to Europe and other parts of the world «... at a price that does not in any way include the ecological costs that must be paid today».
- Fishermen throw explosive charges on coral reefs or just sweep them away when enormous trawls are pulled across the bottom of the oceans in search of ever fewer and fewer fish.
- Experts have emphasized again and again that coral reefs and mangrove forests are critically important for the ecological balance and the protection of sensitive coastal areas by slowing down giant waves and neutralizing much of the destructive energy.

Despite all warnings, commercial interests were stronger than the safety of humans, animals and the environment. After the catastrophe, the United Nations and national politicians made every effort to meet the challenge. It was agreed that existing alarm systems would be made available to others and new ones developed. But who is talking about healing the wounds of nature and avoiding new ones? Would not this be the right moment to think about fundamental changes? Should international organizations such as the FAO, the WHO and the EU not finally make a blueprint for a better future in which vegetarianism plays a much greater role?

Of course, vegetarians can not prevent an earthquake, but they also have no part in the enormous amount of devastation that the production of meat causes: Anyone who does not consume meat contributes to the recovery of our planet and thus to a safer future for all.

Burma: Nothing learned from the 2004 tsunami? Thousands killed for shrimps and fish production

The biggest damage to the storm in Burma at the beginning of May 2008 originated in coastal regions. There were tens of thousands of dead and around one million homeless. Only through the deforestation of the mangrove forests on the coastal areas could reach the disaster of this scale. The dense mangrove forests offer good protection against tsunamis and storms, as they leave the environmental influences from the sea only in a much attenuated form to the interior. In a 2004 study, this was evident in the then devastating tsunami in Sri Lanka. Wherever mangrove forests grew on the coastal areas, the devastation in the interior of the country was much lower.

Scientists of the IUCN ([International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) [2]) have e.g. described two neighboring villages in Sri Lanka compared. One was protected by mangrove forests on the coast, the other not. In the sheltered village there were two dead, in the unprotected 6000.

Why were the mangrove forests cut down, regardless of their use?

Since 1980, almost 4 million hectares of mangrove forests have been destroyed worldwide to use the land differently.

The main use of the areas on which the protective forests were previously located are shrimp and fish farming. The global increase in the consumption of these marine animals, has increased the pressure on the forests. Each year, around 100,000 hectares of mangrove forests are still destroyed - mainly to breed shrimp and fish. Since 1975, about half of the mangrove forests in the Ayeyarwady Delta of Burma have been destroyed.¹

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Fussnoten:

1. BBC News: [Mangrove loss 'put Burma at risk'](#) [3], Spiegel Online: [Wie «Nargis» ein schutzloses Land verwüsten konnte](#) [4] und Welternährungsorganisation der UNO: [Intact mangroves could have reduced Nargis damage](#) [5], 15. Mai 08

Weitere Infos:

- [Lachs: Mastschwein der Meere](#) [6]
- Heise.de: [Die Weihnachtsflut kam nicht wirklich überraschend](#) [7]
- Stern.de: [Intakte Korallenriffe hätten die Wucht der Flutwelle abschwächen können](#) [8]
- EVANA: [UN müssen Tiefseeschätze bewahren](#) [9]

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Links

[1] <https://www.swissveg.ch/tsunami?language=en>

[2] <http://www.iucn.org/>

[3] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7385315.stm>

[4] <http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/natur/burma-wie-nargis-ein-schutzloses-land-verwuesten-konnte-a-551981.html>

[5] <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2008/1000839/index.html>

[6] <http://swissveg.ch/node/39>

[7] <http://www.heise.de/tp/artikel/19/19126/1.html>

[8] <http://www.stern.de/wissen/natur/flutkatastrophe-intakte-umwelt-haette-tsunami-gebremst-534800.html>

[9] <http://www.evana.org/index.php?id=1181&lang=de>