

Entire Towns are illegal in Almanzora – and in the courts
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Agents for the Service for the Protection of the Environment (Seprona) and of the Judicial Police of the Guardia Civil under the Almerian command have in recent years handled dozens of sworn statements on illegal constructions in the municipality of Arboleas and other towns in Almanzora, especially Zurgena and Albox, following complaints in most cases by individual citizens.

Among the complaints investigated is the one made in October 2006 by Ecologists in Action (Almeria), which reported the existence of hundreds of illegally built houses in seven districts of Arboleas, ruled by the socialist mayor Angel Garcia, and projects to build another 6,000.

Among the most serious cases, environmentalists referred to the nucleus of Los Carrascos, which in that year had reached the same population as the town of Albox , and reported that further moves were being made to build more illegal houses to again double that number. The sworn statement at the time was directed to both the the Environmental Prosecutor and the Court in Huércal-Overa.

The Civil Guard officers who attended the Almanzora valley to investigate complaints attested to the existence of "whole villages built on greenfield sites", which were, of course, mentioned in the subsequent statements.

Most complaints were filed around 2005 but have continued to drip feed up to this year, and for the most part the illegality of the construction has been confirmed - no secret in a region, where according to estimates of the Junta de Andalusia there are more than 5,000 homes built outside the law.

Hence the Ministry of Housing, the head of which is Juan Espadas, has devised a plan of inspection that includes the majority of municipalities where illegalities exists (including the three mentioned) Once the count is completed each case will be analysed to try and regularize the majority with due consideration to the criteria set by the Law on Urban Planning in Andalusia (LOUA).