

## **Legal criminal policies of the environment, a case study of the destruction of protected areas**

**Introduction:** Protected areas are among the most vital components of the environment, playing a crucial role in water resource conservation, soil erosion prevention, and biodiversity preservation. Despite the existence of environmental criminal policies, the illegal occupation and destruction of these areas persist, indicating the inefficacy of certain policies and highlighting the necessity for legislative and executive revisions.

**Material and Methods:** This study, adopting a descriptive-analytical approach within the framework of environmental criminology, critically examines the challenges of criminal policy concerning the destruction of protected areas from a legal perspective. Due to their multidimensional and complex nature, the destruction and illegal occupation of these areas differ from other environmental crimes, necessitating more comprehensive and specialized policy measures.

**Results and Discussion:** The research identifies key deficiencies in Iran's legal system, particularly the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms proportional to the severity of environmental damages. Weak deterrent penalties and inadequate legal tools contribute to the continuation of environmental violations. Consequently, the development of robust and comprehensive criminal policies that align with the extent of environmental damage is more pressing than ever. These policies should not only prevent violations but also ensure an effective response to environmental damage through strict enforcement mechanisms, thereby enhancing their deterrent impact.

**Conclusion:** The study underscores the necessity of formulating and implementing modern criminal policies rooted in the principles of sustainable development, ecosystem conservation, and reinforced legal guarantees. Such policies should be prioritized by legislators and policymakers to enhance the protection of sensitive ecological areas. A legal framework that integrates stringent enforcement measures with sustainability principles will not only improve the protection level of these regions but also secure their long-term preservation.

**Keywords:** Environmental, criminal policy, protected areas, environmental crimes.