

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Climate Justice – 30 September 2021

Background

The remit of the CEEAC Committee includes international development; and the **Climate Justice Fund** sits within international development.

The term **Climate justice** is used to frame climate change as an ethical and political issue, rather than one that is purely environmental or physical in nature. This is done by relating the causes and effects of climate change to concepts of justice, particularly environmental justice and social justice. Climate justice examines concepts such as equality, human rights, collective rights, and the historical responsibilities for climate change.

Climate justice actions are increasingly considered to include legal action on climate change issues and related activism. There has been a [notable recent rise in climate change activism](#), with protests on the streets and Greta Thunberg's solo school strike for climate action becoming [Fridays for Future](#), a globally co-ordinated movement, bringing together concerned young people from across the world. Six [Extinction Rebellion](#) protesters were recently cleared by jury of causing criminal damage, despite the judge instructing that there was no defence in law for their actions. The protesters, defending themselves, had argued that their actions were a "necessary" and "proportionate" response to the harm being caused.

Further legal cases across Europe have focussed on state support for fossil fuel companies and human rights:

- x In Holland, the Supreme Court ruled that the Government must act urgently to reduce emissions and to bring them in line with their human rights obligations
- x Again in Holland, a civil court has ruled that by 2030, Shell must cut its CO₂ emissions by 45% compared to 2019 levels
- x In Germany, the Constitutional Court ruled that climate protection is a human right, and that the actions of current generations are to the detriment of future generations
- x In Spain, the Parliament has passed a law banning new permits for fossil fuel exploration and extraction, and for an end to all extraction by 2042
- x A High Court action has also been lodged in the UK which challenges the tax breaks given to domestic oil and gas companies, and the official policy of maximising economic recovery.

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