

Emma Thompson and Greta Thunberg among critics of Shell's Greenpeace case

More than 30 public figures sign letter condemning \$1m legal action



Emma Thompson during a 2015 climate march in London. Photograph: John Cobb/AP

More than 30 public figures including Emma Thompson, Imelda Staunton and Greta Thunberg have written to Shell criticising its “callous and vindictive” lawsuit against [Greenpeace](#) after activists occupied a moving oil platform last year.

In one of the biggest legal threats in the environmental charity’s 50-year history, [Shell](#) is suing it for \$1m (£790,000) in damages, with costs that could run into the millions.

The move follows a protest in January last year in which four Greenpeace activists boarded a platform north of the Canary Islands that was being transported to the Shetland Islands, holding signs stating: “Stop drilling - start paying.”

Monday’s [letter](#), signed by dozens of prominent musicians, activists, and lawyers as well as more than 100,000 members of the public, calls on Shell to respect the right to protest.

“The Greenpeace activists were demanding that Shell stop drilling for new oil and gas and use its vast resources to support communities least able to respond to the impacts of climate change,” it states. “These are entirely legitimate demands and your transparent attempt to intimidate them is outrageous and frankly dangerous.”

The letter adds: “We call on you to respect people’s right to protest against climate change; cease the development of new oil and gas; and use your immense wealth to help those countries and communities most impacted by the climate crisis that you have played no small part in creating.”

In response, a Shell spokesperson added: “The right to protest is fundamental and Shell respects it absolutely. But it must be done safely and lawfully. Boarding a 72,000 metric ton moving vessel at sea was unlawful and extremely dangerous. A judge said Greenpeace protesters were “putting their lives and, indirectly, the lives of the crew at risk”.

“In filing a claim in February 2023, we sought to prevent an escalation of protests on the vessel, which was already a danger to the lives of the protesters and crew. The majority of costs claimed were incurred by contractors and sub-contractors working for Shell, who put in place appropriate safety measures to protect all people involved, including the protesters.”

The letter, which was sent on Friday to the Shell CEO, Wael Sawan, is also supported by civil society groups including Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth.

The writer and chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, one of the signatories, said the lawsuit “beggars belief”.

“Shell boasts constantly of its green credentials, while using its vast wealth to harass climate activists who peacefully call out its climate-wrecking business practices.”

Philip Evans, a campaigner at Greenpeace UK, said: “We’re living in a world turned upside down. The UK government should be leading the way towards a future without the fossil fuels it knows are driving a cost of living crisis at home and climate chaos around the world. But instead, oil giants like Shell are handed new exploration and drilling licences that will exacerbate both crises, while they throw lawsuits against climate groups who dare to challenge them.”

A) FIND THE WORD

In tyhe text, find a word which means:

1. showing a strong desire for revenge.
2. a cruel disregard for others
3. a person who campaigns to bring about political or social change.
4. able to be defended, valid.
5. frighten someone to make them do something
6. subject to aggressive pressure
7. make (a problem, bad situation, or negative feeling) worse.
8. draw critical attention to someone's unacceptable actions or behaviour. (phrasal verb)
9. a rapid increase
10. impossible to believe

B) DISCUSSION

1. Do people protest in your country? If so, which issues do people protest about?
2. Have you ever protested? Which issues do you consider are worth protesting about?
3. Do people care about climate change in your country? What steps do people take to combat the effects of global warming?
4. What do you do in your personal life to help combat the effects of climate change?
5. What are the most effective day to day strategies people could employ to help combat climate change?

Source: *The Guardian* 01/04/24

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/apr/01/public-figures-urge-shell-to-drop-lawsuit-against-greenpeace>