

Extinction Rebellion

The British-based group Extinction Rebellion has called for nonviolent acts of civil disobedience on April 15 in capitals around the world to reverse our “one-way track to extinction.” The group has stressed what it calls a “pre-social-media age” strategy for organizing. It has created structures to make decisions and issue demands. It sends out teams to give talks in communities. It insists that people who participate in the actions of Rebellion Extinction undergo “nonviolent direct-action” training so they will not be provoked by the police or opposition groups.

Extinction Rebellion has already demonstrated its clout, blocking roads, occupying government departments and amassing 6,000 people to shut down five of London’s bridges last Nov. 17. Scores of arrests were made. But it was just the warm-up act. In April, the group hopes, the final assault will begin. Here is what Roger Hallam, the co-founder of Rebellion Extinction and a researcher at King’s College London had to say:

“Most of recent mass mobilizations have been social-media-fueled. Consequently, they have been chaotic. They are extremely fast mobilizations. Social media’s a bit like heroin. It’s a high, but then it collapses, like we’ve seen in France. It becomes chaotic or violent. A lot of modern social movements put stuff on social media. It gets clogged up with trolls. There’s lots of radical-left organizations arguing about different privileges. We’ve circumvented that and gone straight to the ‘common people,’ as you might say. We’ve held meetings in village town halls and city halls. We go around the country in a 19th-century sort of way, saying, ‘Hey guys. We’re all fucked. People are going to die if this isn’t sorted out.’ The second half of the talk is: There’s a way of dealing with this called mass civil disobedience.

“We’ve got an existential emergency that could destroy human society in the next 10 years. It’s in the cards. A lot of us have already gone through the grief process. But people who have just had that enlightenment are in shock. They’re maintaining a veneer of ‘it’s sort of OK.’ This is what the New Green Deal is about. It is an attempt to pretend that industrialization can stay the same. We can all still be wealthy. We can all still have great jobs. It is like Roosevelt’s New Deal. But the New Deal was based on the idea that we can carry on plundering nature and nothing’s going to happen.

Maybe that was right in the 1930s. But it’s not right anymore. It’s a matter of physics and biology. We simply cannot maintain these levels of consumption. They haven’t reckoned with that. One of the main reasons the climate debate has not gotten into a serious mode over the last 30 years is because **people who are in charge of informing the public are terrified of telling the public that they can’t have the high consumer lifestyle anymore.** It’s a taboo. But like any addiction, there comes a moment of truth. We’re there now.

“Nonviolent discipline, as the research shows, is the No. 1 criterion for maximizing the potential for success. This is not a moral observation. Violence destroys movements. The Global South has been at it for a few decades. Violence just ends up with people getting shot. It doesn’t lead anywhere. You might as well take your chances and maintain nonviolent discipline. There’s a big debate within the radical left over the attitude towards the police. This debate is a proxy for the justification of violence. As soon as you don’t talk to police, you’re more likely to provoke police violence. We try to charm the police so they’ll arrest people in a civilized way. We say to the police, ‘Look, we’re going to be blocking the streets. We’re not going to not do that because you ask us not to.’ That’s the first thing to make clear. This is not an item for discussion. They know it’s serious. They don’t try to dissuade us. That would be silly. What they are concerned about is violence and public disorder. It’s in our interest as civil-disobedience designers not to have public disorder, because it becomes chaotic.

“People have to go to the capital city, that’s where the elite is, the business class. That’s where the pillars of the state exist. That’s the first element. Then you have to have a lot of people involved. They have to break the law. There’s no point in just doing a march. They have to literally close down the streets. They have to remain nonviolent. That’s absolutely crucial. Once you get violent, police and the state have an excuse to remove you. It’s got to be cultural. You make it into a sort of Woodstock affair. Then thousands more people come onto the streets.

“You don’t need 3 million. You need enough for the state to have to decide whether to use repression on a mass scale or invite you into the room. The gambit, of course, particularly in the U.K., is that the state is weak.

It’s been hollowed out by neoliberalism. They’re going to find themselves overwhelmed. We will get in the room.

“We’re going to start on Monday April 15. “We’re going to block several major roadways in central London. We’re going to spread across the city—swarming. **When the riot police or the police come, we’re going get up and go somewhere else.** This is a tactic we innovated in November. We’ll give the authorities a fundamental dilemma: ‘Do we allow these people to continue blocking the center of a global city, or do we arrest thousands of people?’ If they opt for arresting thousands of people, lots of things are going to happen. They will be overwhelmed. I’ve been arrested 10, 12 times in the last two years. Every time, police come up to me going, ‘Keep it up, mate. What you’re doing is great.’ We’re disciplined, nonviolent people. They’re not going to get pissed off at us. They also know it’s over. They spend their days scraping mentally ill people off the streets. There’s no glamour in being a police officer in a global city. The security forces are something you want to subvert, not denigrate.

“You’re basically holding the economy of a city to ransom. It’s the same dynamic as a labor strike. You want to get into the room and have a negotiation. We’ve got three demands—the government tells the truth, the carbon emissions go to zero by 2025, and we have a national assembly which will sort out what the British people want to do about it. Unless you have a clearheaded mass mobilization on the left which is connected with the working class you’re not going to be able to stop the fascism which is the alternative.”

I do not know if this effort will succeed. But I do know it is the only mechanism left to force action by the ruling elites, who, although global warming has been well documented for at least three decades, have refused to carry out the measures needed to protect the planet and the human race. We must, in wave after wave, carry out nonviolent acts of civil disobedience to shut down the capitals of the major industrial countries, crippling commerce and transportation, until the ruling elites are forced to publicly state the truth about climate catastrophe, implement radical measures to halt carbon emissions by 2025 and empower an independent citizens committee to oversee the termination of our 150-year binge on fossil fuels. If we do not do this, we will face mass death.

Chris Hedges
TruthDig.com



Extinction Rebellion Activists Arrested Outside Oil Conference

Nine activists from the environmental group Extinction Rebellion have been arrested after they glued themselves to the front of a central London hotel to demand that the petroleum industry end its “deeply immoral” behaviour in driving climate change.

Specialist police officers spent about two hours unsticking the protesters from windows next to the entrance of the InterContinental Park Lane hotel in Mayfair, which was hosting an oil and gas industry conference.

Police put up screens to conceal the protesters from view as the officers detached them. Security staff had previously attempted to remove the protesters.

As one protester was led to a police van, she said:

“I’ve been a very law-abiding citizen all my life but I realize now that is not really working. I am a mother of two girls and I am really terrified about their future. We can’t just carry on like this.”

Another said: *“The petroleum industry has been complicit in the destruction of our environment and they have been making money out of selling products that are harmful and we need them to stop.”*

Jeremy, 51, IT consultant, glued on to the Park Lane Hotel, where oil and gas industry leaders are gathering for International Petroleum Week *“I’m here because I’m acting like the truth of the climate and ecological emergency is real.”* The arrestees, including Jackson Harries, a film-maker, were taken to local police stations.

A Metropolitan police spokesperson said: “Police were called to reports of a protest at a hotel on Hamilton Place, W1. Officers attended and discovered a number of people had glued themselves to windows. Nine people have been arrested on suspicion of offences including aggravated trespass and criminal damage.”

The protest came halfway through International Petroleum Week, an event organised by the Energy Institute to bring together global energy experts and to manage “tension between sustainability demands and operational, business return”.

Extinction Rebellion said oil and gas operators and investors should respond seriously to the climate crisis rather than meet to form new partnerships and discuss expansion.



Sam Knights, an activist with the group, said: “These companies are destroying our planet. We have to start talking about that. We have to start pointing out, again and again, that their business model is based on the mass murder of hundreds and millions of people. They know this.

“In fact, they have known this for a very long time. But they refuse to change. They continue to put private profit over human life. The fact that they are still talking about acquiring new fossil fuel reserves at this point in the climate crisis is not only deeply immoral, it is evidently criminal. We all have a moral duty to stop them.”

The conference heard a speech from the international trade secretary, Liam Fox, who entered the venue through a side entrance.

The Guardian asked the Department for International Trade for a copy of the speech and initially received extracts in which Fox declared that the UK government “will not use Brexit to lower environmental standards”, before being given the full document.

He highlighted the importance of the oil and gas sector to the UK and restated the country’s commitment under the Climate Change Act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% between 1990 and 2050.

Discussion topics at the conference on Wednesday included “unlocking opportunities on [Africa’s] next hotspots”, adapting to “climate change impacts that are now unavoidable” and exploration of a number of new oil prospects.

Outside the hotel, attendees said they sympathised with the protesters. “We all do, as human beings,” one said. “However, we do different things to reach the same goal, a better world.”

Extinction Rebellion, which last November blockaded five bridges in central London, said it would continue to embark on a “campaign of rebellion” to highlight what it said was the criminal inaction of the UK government on climate change.

It said a series of events were planned in the run-up to an “international climate rebellion” planned for 15 April, in which it says thousands of activists will gather in London. Similar events are planned by Extinction Rebellion groups in 30 other countries.

“While politicians rearrange the Brexit deckchairs, the British people are heading for extinction due to the ecological emergency,” the group said in a statement. “The rich and powerful who run this country continue to refuse to do their duty to protect us from disaster ... that is why we have to rebel.”

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