

# Hollande called on to lift ban on climate protests at COP 21

December 1, 2015



An international coalition of NGOs, civil society groups and political figures such as Naomi Klein and Susan George have called on the French president to lift the ban on protests during the COP 21 climate talks in Paris, which began on November 30th.

Following November's terror attacks in Paris, the French government has imposed a temporary state of emergency that has prevented any protests from taking place in France. The local coalition of NGOs and trade unions in France, Climat 21, had planned a series of protests in Paris before, during and at the end of the climate talks which have now been banned.

Over forty different groups and individuals from countries including Brazil, Belgium, India, the USA, Korea and the UK have signed on to the letter which tells President Hollande that "we are deeply concerned by the decision of your government to prohibit the mobilisations in Paris during COP21. This will make it extremely difficult for ordinary citizens of the world to make their voices heard and to create the political space necessary to build a brighter future. We believe this strips the COP process of its legitimacy."

Nick Dearden, the director of Global Justice Now said:

"People from all over the world are flocking to Paris to have their voices heard on one of the most urgent challenges of our lifetime - the threat of climate change. It is essential that there is robust participation from civil society during the climate talks and that world leaders are held accountable for how they engage with the issue.

"One of the aims of terrorists in carrying out atrocities like we have seen in Paris is to attempt to disrupt and derail how ordinary people go about their lives. The French authorities have said that 'life must go on' with regards to public occasions like football matches, and we call on President Hollande to use similar logic in standing strong against these attacks by allowing people the fundamental right to protest on crucially important issues like climate change during the UN talks."

Thomas Coutrot, the spokesperson for Attac France, one of the NGOs that had been involved in organising demonstrations in Paris said:

"The French authorities are using the shock of the 13 November killings to cancel demonstrations throughout the country, even in small cities where no terrorist threat is plausible. Do they want to keep us silent in the face of the results of COP 21, and its probable failure to tackle effectively climate change? Attac and its partners will be pushing hard to ensure our voices are not silenced."

The letter has also been made into an online petition that members of the public are being invited to

sign.

## **The letter and its signatories**

Dear Mr. President,

We want to express our sympathy with the French people for the terrorist attacks that took place last weekend. The barbaric attacks on civilians in Paris, Ankara, Bamako and Beirut in recent weeks are the latest terrible symptoms of a world economy experiencing multiple crises.

One of those crises is climate change. As you will be aware, we have driven our planet to the verge of environmental catastrophe. The impacts are being felt everywhere to a greater or lesser degree. Indeed the conflict in Syria was partly fuelled by climatic events. And unless we start enacting very different policies, climate change will increasingly fuel war, migration, poverty and dispossession.

That's why many of us are coming to Paris in the next fortnight - to demand world leaders begin the radical transformation to a low carbon economy, with serious financing to assist less industrialised countries to build societies without resort to fossil fuels. We understand that the challenge is huge. It isn't possible for politicians to carry out the changes needed without massive movements and mobilisations creating political space and will.

For this reason we are deeply concerned by the decision of your government to prohibit the mobilisations in Paris during COP21. This will make it extremely difficult for ordinary citizens of the world to make their voices heard and to create the political space necessary to build a brighter future. We believe this strips the COP process of its legitimacy.

We urge you to reconsider the decision to prohibit the demonstrations in Paris. We understand the need to keep citizens safe, including those mobilising on climate change. It must be possible to find a way to do this short of banning our demonstrations. Many other mass events and gatherings continue to happen in Paris on a daily basis. We would also like to ensure that the police treat us with dignity and that you send a clear message that our civil liberties be respected.

We must not suspend democracy and freedom while proclaiming our commitment to democracy and freedom. A peaceful world can only be built on equality, solidarity and sustainability. We must be able to say this in Paris.

Yours,

Naomi Klein, writer

Friends of the Earth International

Avi Lewis, filmmaker

Shalmali Guttal, researcher and writer

Susan George, writer

Global Justice Now, UK

Bolivian Platform on Climate Change

Focus on the Global South

Fondacion Solon, Bolivia

Friends of the Earth, Scotland

Ecologistas en Acción (Spain)

Ekoloji Kolektifi / Ecology Collective Association, Turkey

Iniciativa Construyendo Puentes - Redes de Latinoamerica frente al cambio climatico

Campaign against Climate Change, UK

Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha, India

Public & Commercial & Service Union, UK  
Attac Japan  
Transnational Institute  
Engajamundo, Brazil  
Beyond Copenhagen collective, India  
End Ecocide on Earth  
Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development  
Our Rivers, Our Life (OROL) - Philippines  
Corporate Europe Observatory  
IBON International  
Philippine Movement for Climate Justice  
Friends of the Earth Sweden  
Public Advocacy Initiatives for Rights & Values in India (PAIRVI)  
Energy and Climate Policy Institute for Just Transition, Korea  
UK Tar Sands Network  
Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO), Phillipines  
Platform, UK  
Sanlakas, Phillipines  
Planet Defenders, Brazil  
DeSmog, UK  
Labor/Community Strategy Center, USA  
WomanHealth, Phillipines  
*New Internationalist*, UK  
Institute for Policy Studies, Climate Policy Program, USA  
York Climate Action, UK  
Ecological Society of the Philippines  
The Otesha Project, UK  
GAIA - Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives  
Povod Institute, Slovenia  
Abibiman Foundation, Ghana  
Clubs Nations Unies, Senegal  
Excellent World Foundation, Nigeria  
Swedish Antinuclear Movement  
GCAP, Action/2015  
Ageing Nepal  
Global Call to Action Against Poverty, Burundi  
Burundi Child Rights Coalition (BCRC)  
Union de Jeunes pour la Paix et le Développement (UJPD/asbl)  
SÜDWIND, Austria  
Association for Promotion Sustainable Development, India  
The Network of African Youths for Development (NAYD)  
Somos el Presente, Peru  
Alliance Contre la Pauvreté/GCAP Mali  
Youth partnership for Peace and Development, Sierra Leone  
Pakistan Development Alliance  
Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)  
Climate & Sustainable Development Network of Nigeria (CSDevNet)  
Freshwater Action Network. FAN. Geneve  
Red Centroamericana de Acción del Agua. Central America  
Asociación Regional Centroamericana por el Agua y el Ambiente (ARCA)  
Youth Association for Development (YAD), Pakistan

Norway Social Forum  
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)  
Freshwater Action Network, Mexico  
Coletivo Bahia 21, Brazil  
Hagancatwright Organisation, Germany  
PAPDA, Haiti

*This article originally appeared on November 26th*  
at <http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/news/2015/nov/26/hollande-called-lift-ban-climate-protests-cop-21>.