

# Africans Rising

For Justice, Peace & Dignity

18 August 2021

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERS CALL FOR THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE TO DROP CASES AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL PROTESTERS.

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For images: [Link 1](#); [Link 2](#)

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Veteran campaigner for human rights, Kumi Naidoo; economist, Ann Pettifor; and others have [joined the call on the Crown Prosecution Service](#) to drop their cases against peaceful environmental protesters in an open letter today. The appeal comes days after a further four cases were dropped at the Old Bailey, citing the [UK Supreme Court ruling](#) that says that in some instances protesters have a 'lawful excuse' to take certain disruptive actions. The first call on the Director of Public Prosecutions, Max Hill, was issued on Wednesday from a coalition of UK solicitors who represent activists with the environmental group, Extinction Rebellion.

The letter, also signed by Baroness Jenny Jones, Lord Peter Hain and the Head of Greenpeace UK, reminds us that the UK has a significant responsibility to take action on climate change due to the "legacy of colonialism" which, in Africa, "sees much of the land grabbed for extraction and mining projects that damage the people, their lands, and the prospects of future generations. Meanwhile, UK firms enable corruption through some of the most sophisticated tax avoidance schemes."

The letter asks, "Should the UK put its young people in prison for telling that truth?" citing the case against three environmental protestors (pictured below) who face a possible six months sentence for climbing onto the Houses of Parliament in November last year. They face trial in the City of London this October.

The latest IPCC report released this week has been [interpreted as promising "hell on earth"](#) in the next decades if governments do not radically change their policies to protect the environment and bring CO2 emissions to zero. Mr Naidoo's letter argues that it is wrong that

young, peaceful protestors are being fined, locked up and put through severe mental strain simply for saying exactly what these experts now warn will come true in their lifetimes.

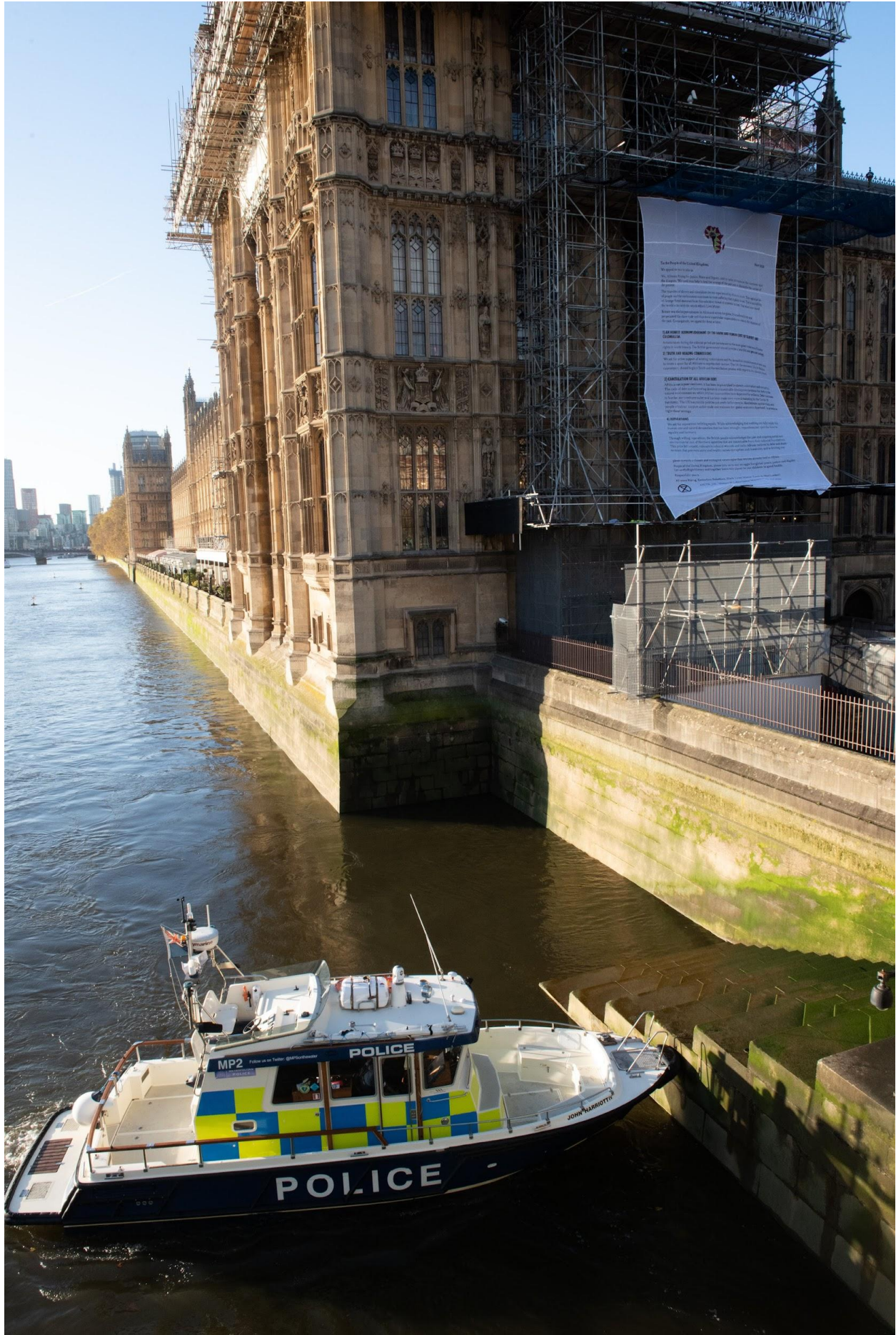
As Lord Peter Hain recently pointed out, “the suffragette Emily Wilding Davison locked herself in a Westminster cupboard in a protest campaigning for equal rights for women. If she had done this today, she too would be prosecuted under the Serious Organised Crime Act. This is not terrorism, these are peaceful actions for a more just world.”

The CPS has come under fire in recent months for “[betraying rape victims](#)” which had [been attributed to “under resourced CPS staff”](#) but the Ziegler ruling calls into question whether pursuing the prosecution of an estimated 2,500 protestors who have been arrested since April 2019 as part of the Extinction Rebellion environmental movement is not also a dangerous misallocation of resources with a serious, direct effect on the UK public.

On August 4th, Judge Mark Dennis QC overturned the convictions of Robert MacQueen and Rose Goodwin and [instructed the CPS](#) to review cases to account for the Ziegler ruling. The request also follows the acquittals by a jury at Southwark Crown Court of Simon Bramwell, Ian Bray, Jane Augsburg, Senan Clifford, David Lambert, and James Saunders, and the subsequent acquittals of Katie Ritchie-Moulin, Harrison Radcliffe, and Luca Vitale by a District Judge at Liverpool Magistrates’ Court

Next Monday, August 23rd, Extinction Rebellion have promised to take to the streets of London again. Previous so-called rebellions have resulted in thousands of arrests in the space of a single week.







*A giant banner placed by activists hangs from the side of the Houses of Parliament.*  
c. Mark Kerrison



*A photo of the activists that took part in hanging the banner from the Houses of Parliament.*

TEXT OF THE LETTER

# Africans Rising

For Justice, Peace & Dignity

17 August 2021

To the Director of Public Prosecutions, Max Hill QC, and the Crown Prosecution Service,

Dear Mr. Hill and to all whom it may concern at the CPS,

On August 9th 2021, the IPCC issued a dire warning about the Earth's climate that the Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, declared a 'Code Red' for humanity. Given the absolute urgency we face with regard to the climate crisis, it is immoral and a breach of human rights to prosecute peaceful climate activists simply for saying [what the IPCC has just stated](#): that major climate changes are inevitable and irreversible unless we take drastic action now.

History tells us that what is legal is not necessarily just, right or ethical. Slavery, apartheid, settler colonialism and the destruction of our forests are a few recent examples of once legal activities which are now being recognised as being manifestly unjust. History also shows that where laws are clearly immoral, some people will obey the moral imperative to shine a light on them by non-violent means.

What can we expect of our young people when their professors and expert scientists tell them that their future will become "[hell on Earth](#)"? How do we expect them to feel when they see global leaders of their parents' generation doing nothing while the state prosecutes people - some even younger than themselves, for telling the truth?

Take as an example [the three young climate activists](#) who are currently on trial for allegedly committing an offence contrary to the Serious Organised Crime and Policing Act of 2005 and face a maximum sentence of six months in prison. They are young Londoners who understand, as the report makes clear, that the effects of global heating will be felt disproportionately by the people of the global south. They climbed quietly and peacefully into the grounds of the Houses of Parliaments to hang a hand-painted letter on the side of the building asking for debt relief for African nations just weeks before Zambia was forced into default. They did this at the peak of the coronavirus pandemic in Africa, when healthcare systems, which have been underfunded due partly to the heavy debts and high interest rates which poorer nations are forced to pay, were struggling to cope with rising infections. The legacy of colonialism on the continent sees much of the land grabbed for extraction and mining projects that damage the people, their lands, and the prospects of future generations. Meanwhile, UK firms enable corruption through some of the most sophisticated tax avoidance schemes. Should the UK put its young people in prison for telling that truth?

Climate change is a global, existential crisis. It has its roots in a history of exploitation, extraction, depletion and 'othering'. Many young people see this and will act on it because for them, hell really is around the corner in a way it is not for the old, or so it appears. A nation that does not criminalize this way of speaking is taking the climate crisis and the IPCC report seriously.

Since 2005, the United Nations has agreed that member states are responsible for protecting their citizens from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. The climate crisis will have devastating impacts akin to these - if we cannot say the same - unless governments take positive action to prevent climate change.

The prosecution of peaceful protesters exercising their freedoms of expression, assembly and association is a breach of Articles 10 and 11 of the ECHR. The IPCC report proves again that these protests are a proportional response to the crisis facing all of us; the protesters' actions are vindicated since they are asking their government to honour its responsibility to protect its present and future citizens in line with expert advice.

There are occasions of crisis, injustice or violence when protest through direct action is a reasonable, proportional, and necessary response. In these instances, certain peaceful but disruptive actions have a lawful excuse as has been made clear by the recent [UK Supreme Court ruling](#) in the case against Ziegler. Following this ruling, Judge Mark Dennis QC [urged](#) the CPS to review all its cases where this judgment is applicable.

I call on the Director of Public Prosecutions to drop its cases against non-violent environmental protesters given the evidence we have about the state of the world and its fragile climate. We should be listening to and honouring young people who are standing up for their generation's future rather than criminalising them. In November, the UK government will host the COP26 climate negotiations in Glasgow. Discontinuing prosecutions against non-violent climate change protesters is an action that would encourage other governments and prosecuting authorities around the world to ensure their responses to peaceful climate protests recognise the urgency of the climate crisis.

Yours sincerely,

Kumi Naidoo, Global Ambassador of Africans Rising for Justice, Peace and Dignity; former Secretary General of Amnesty International and former Executive Director, Greenpeace International.

Jenny Jones, Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb, Green Party

Peter Hain, the Rt Hon Lord Hain, Labour Party

Ann Pettifor, Director, Policy Research in Macroeconomics (PRIME)

John Sauven, Executive Director, Greenpeace UK

Caroline Lucas, Member of Parliament for Brighton Pavilion, Green Party

Nick Dearden, Director, Global Justice Now

Amb Vincent Gbosi, Partners For Peace Network in the Niger Delta (P4P), Rivers State Chapter, Nigeria

Stephen Corry, ex-CEO Survival International



C. Mark Kerrison