

Report Legal In Action 2024

Report from the “Legal In Action” Conference 2024.

We came together in Amsterdam from 18th to 22nd October 2024 as activist organised legal teams from 15 countries (mostly Europe) to get an overview on the state of repression, exchange experiences on structure and strategy and think of shared approaches. All groups are working with civil disobedience in the climate justice movement.

In Europe, we are seeing a clear pattern of escalating repression against peaceful yet defiant protests. As many countries shift toward more authoritarian systems in response to crises, fundamental human and democratic rights are increasingly overlooked.

In the UK, over 40 political prisoners are currently held, some serving long prison sentences. In Germany, parts of the climate movement are being prosecuted as a “criminal organization,” and similar repressive actions are happening across the continent. This has created a significant "chilling effect," with both governments and private companies working to suppress dissent.

Investigations after provisions to combat organised crime are copied by authorities throughout Europe. In other countries like Denmark and Finland, authorities implement less violent forms of repression, but discourage protest by methods of “smart repression”. For example, in Finland the police control fundraising licences, thus XR wasn’t allowed to fundraise for years of legal struggle against the arbitrary restriction.

However, we observed parallels in state’s tactics throughout Europe. Spraying paint on government buildings made repression escalate in Germany and Finland in a very similar way, showing how valuable regular exchange and knowledge transfer is for our work.

In addition to government-driven repression in Europe, activists in Congo face state repression and violence by organised gangs and militias that puts the activists at great risk, while their activism and the violence they experience are oftentimes less visible as it happens outside of Europe.

We compared our group’s structures and exchanged thoughts on how to best organise a stable support for activists.

In focus groups on smart repression, networking, strategies in courts, strategic litigation on a European level and combined media and press strategy, we discussed advantages of a network approach and different ideas that have worked in our respective countries.

There was also space for reflecting on the emotional challenge of supporting activists faced with violence and repression and exchange on how to stay strong and connected as a support structure. In the presence of many other groups working in the same area, we found

comfort in not being alone, but strong together in the face of rising authoritarianism and the climate catastrophe.

Human rights defenders worldwide are losing the fight over the narrative against “law and order” authoritarians. Together, we discussed counter narratives and tactics on joining forces to protect human rights and protest against globally connected authoritarian stories, composed by think tanks and the fossil fuel industry.

On the third day, we were joined by NGO representatives from Amnesty International, Greenpeace International Legal, Green Legal Impact, Stay Grounded, Amnesty International, Global Climate Legal Defense (CliDef) and the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights to discuss how activist support structures and NGO structures can best shape these narratives and protect human rights together.

At the “Legal In Action” conference, we laid the groundwork for a network that creates room for regular exchange of thoughts and material, campaigns and shared strategies, and quick international media and press reaction to severe events of repression in national contexts. This new network will be closely connected to the existing “Legally Green” network that consists mostly of lawyers and NGOs.

A next “Legal In Action” conference for 2025 is already in planning. If you are part of a legal support structure, feel welcome to sign up for the next conference on our [website](#). If you wish to join the network or have questions, don’t hesitate to write to legalinaction@proton.me.

Looking forward to find strength and inspiration in each other,
The participants of “Legal In Action 2024”:

UK (Climate Action Support Pathway (CASP), Defend our Juries, Animal Rising)

Netherlands (XR legal)

Germany (Rückendeckung für eine Aktive Zivilgesellschaft (RAZ e.V.), Letzte Generation)

Finland (XR)

Chechia (Movement Hub/Legally Green Network, Climate litigation Czech Republic/legal team Limity jsme my)

Scotland (XR, This Is Rigged, Scottish Community & Activist Legal Project (SCALP))

Congo (XR Rutshuru DRC)

Poland (Ostatnie Pokolenie)

Denmark (Nødbremsen, Ulydig Retshjælp, NOAH, Friends of the Earth Denmark)

Norway (Folk Mot Fossilmakta, Beskytt Demokratiet)

Sweden (Återställ Våtmarker, Rosamålet - The Rosa Case, Ta tillbaka framtiden (Reclaim the Future), XR)

Portugal (Climáximo)

France (Dernier Renovation, Soulevement de la terre, Riposte Alimentaire, XR France, Mouvement de soutien aux défenseur:es de l'environnement (msde))

Belgium (Legal Team Collective)

Spain (Future Vegetal, XR)