

Climate Strikes Campaign Briefing



Human Rights and Climate Change

Amnesty International has named the insufficient action of governments to act on climate as potentially the biggest inter-generational human rights violation in history.

Many rights are affected by climate change, including the right to life, right to health, right to housing and rights to water and sanitation. Climate change is also likely to exacerbate inequality, including between developed and developing countries, between different ethnicities, classes and between people of different genders, as well as between generations.

Amnesty has historically campaigned in solidarity with environmental Human Rights Defenders, who often face repression, and will continue to do so. Thanks to the initiative of the University of Edinburgh Amnesty Group who proposed that Amnesty should work on climate change, Amnesty International now works against climate change directly.

Schools strikes

Inspired by the initiative of Swedish school student Greta Thunberg, hundreds of thousands of young people around the world including in the UK have gone on monthly strikes from school to highlight the issue. As a result of these and other campaigns, more than sixty local councils have now formally recognised that there is a climate emergency, as have the UK and Scottish Parliaments.

You can find out more about the UK Student Climate Change Network who are helping organise the strikes at <https://ukscn.org/>

Where we stand

States have the duty to protect people from harm to the enjoyment of their human rights, including the adverse effects of climate change. This means that states must take all reasonable steps, to the full extent of their abilities, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the shortest possible timeframe. This will need to involve ending the use of any fossil fuels (coal, oil or gas) as soon as possible, including by ending all forms of allocation of public funds to subsidise fossil fuel companies,

States must also make sure that measures intended to protect people from the effects of climate change do not result in human rights violations and that the transition towards a zero-carbon economy enhances human rights, including by addressing inequalities and discrimination. This is what we refer to as a just transition, which could be achieved through what some are referring to as a 'Green New Deal'.

Week of Action

An international week of action, from the 20th - 27th September, has been called by student leaders around the world, and is supported by Amnesty International amongst others. The 20th September will see a day of strikes organised by UKSCN, and the 27th September will be a global strike.

The Amnesty Student Action Network is encouraging all student groups to support the week of action and subsequent strikes during the 2019-2020 academic year. This means finding out what's happening where you are, helping to make it visible, accessible and safe, and mobilising as many people to come as possible.

If there isn't anything organised where you are already, your group can organise it! This could be a protest in the centre of your campus, a rally in a lecture theatre, a teach-in about climate change or something else. Remember to take the chance to explain why climate change is a human rights issue.

In your Freshers Pack you'll find lots of materials to help mobilise students on your campus around the strikes, which you can give out at your Freshers Fair and other events.

Our ask

We're calling on UK universities to declare a climate emergency, and to organise student and staff assemblies to identify how their institution can contribute to solving the climate crisis.

This could include;

- A commitment to phasing out the use of fossil fuels
- Investing in climate change research and skills creation
- Increasing sustainable education across the curriculum
- Communicating this to the government and key decision makers

This year the University of Exeter, University of Bristol and University of Newcastle have already declared climate emergencies, joining thousands of institutions globally.

Throughout the year

The global week of action is just the start. In order to meet our demands, we need to keep up campaigning and mobilising throughout the year. Here are some things you can do to engage students on your campus keep pressure on your institution to declare a climate emergency.

- Support climate strikes in October and November
 - The climate strikes are set to continue every month. Keep momentum up on campus by mobilising for each strike or organising a day of action in solidarity. The dates are usually announced around a month in advance, and we'll make sure to keep the Amnesty Student Network up to date.
 - Reach out to University College Union (UCU) on your campus and organise actions together.
 - The UKSCN are also looking for stewards to support on strike days, in London and further afield. Get in touch with UKSCN (ukscn.org) if you can help out.
- Pass a student union motion in support of the campaign
 - Passing a student union motion means your Student Union will be mandated to support the campaign and keep growing the movement. This can add significant pressure to your University, provide extra resource for your campaigning, and open the door to making you institution greener too.
 - A template student union motion will be available soon.
- Organise speaker event or film screening
 - A film screening or panel event is a great way of engaging new people with the campaign as they can find out more about the issue and be inspired to get more involved.
 - We'll be compiling a list of potential speakers you can contact, including environmental human rights defenders, as well as list of films you could show.
- Organise a clothes swap to promote a more sustainable lifestyle
 - Solving the climate crisis requires systemic change, but that doesn't mean there aren't things we can do in our own lives to help the planet. Clothes swaps are a great way of promoting more a sustainable lifestyle.
 - [Check out our clothes swap guide](#) to find out how you can organise one on campus. If you want to organise clothes swap you'll need to start planning a couple of months in advance.
- Keep writing letters
 - The movement of young Human Rights Defenders for the environment is global and needs our support. In November or December organising letter writing events in solidarity as part of *Write for Rights*.

Glossary

National Union of Students (NUS)

- The NUS are the national body that represent 7 million students across the UK. They champion students to shape the future of education – and create a better world. By bringing together evidence-based campaigns and student-led democracy the NNUS represent students' interests nationally and develop research that influences national policy. They take on all the issues that affect students' lives now and in future.

UK Schools Climate Network (UKSCN)

- UKSCN is a group of mostly under 18s taking to the streets to protest the government's lack of action on the Climate Crisis. UKSCN was set up by a small group of volunteers that were inspired by the powerful and direct protests made by young people against climate inaction across the rest of Europe. In particular, young climate activist Greta Thunberg's speeches and ideas are central to their mission.

Freshers Pack

- We send a Fresher's Pack out to all our groups at the start of the year. This contains lots of materials for the year ahead including guides, badges, stickers, posters and placards! This year the pack contains our brand-new Climate Strike materials! Your pack will arrive at your student's union on 2nd September. Please get in touch directly with your student union in September to receive your pack.

Teach In

- A teach in is an extended meeting usually held on a university campus for lectures, debates, and discussions to raise awareness of or express a position on a social or political issue. Teach ins can also be used to occupy space for a period of time as a form of protest.

Student Union Motion

- Student Unions are democratic organizations – and you, the students, are their members. This means their policy is set by you, usually through passing motions at meetings. The process varies from SU to SU (check out their website to find out how it works at your university).

Write for Rights

- Every year, we run Write for Rights, a campaign over November and December where we encourage you to write messages of support to people around the world who have suffered injustice, and show you how to support their campaigns for justice. We run this campaign every year because [we know it works](#).