

Big Oil Ignores Millions Of Climate Deaths When Billions In Profit Are At Stake



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04-08-2024 ~ *As the world burns, radical climate change activism is our only hope.*

Human activity in a profit-driven world divided by nation-states and those who have rights and those who don't is the primary driver of climate change. Burning fossil fuels and destroying forests have caused inestimable environmental harm by producing a warming effect through the artificial concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. [Carbon dioxide \(CO2\)](#) has risen by 50 percent in the past 200 years, much of it since the 1970s, raising in turn the Earth's temperature by roughly [2 degrees Fahrenheit](#).

Indeed, since the 1970s, the decade which saw the rise of neoliberalism as the dominant economic ideology in the Western world, CO2 emissions have increased by about [90 percent](#). Unsurprisingly, average temperatures have risen more quickly over the past few decades, and the last 10 years have been the warmest years on record. In fact, a National Aeronautics and Space Administration analysis has confirmed that [2023](#) was the warmest year on record, and all indications are that 2024 could be even hotter than 2023. In March, scientists at Copernicus Climate Change Service said that [February 2024](#) was the hottest February, according to records going back to 1940.

The world is now warming faster than any point in recorded history. Yet, while the science of climate change is well established and we know both the causes and the effects of global warming, the rulers of the world are showing no signs of discontinuing their destructive activities that are putting Earth on track to becoming uninhabitable for humans. Emissions from Russia's war in Ukraine and Israel's utter destruction of Gaza will undoubtedly have a significant effect on climate change. [Analysis](#) by researchers in the United Kingdom and United States reveals that the majority of global emissions generated in the first two months of the Israeli invasion of Gaza can be attributed to the aerial bombardment of the Gaza Strip. Indeed, the destruction of Gaza is so immense that it exceeds, proportionally, [the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II](#).

Further evidence that the rulers of the world view themselves as being separate and distinct from the world around them (in spite of the fact that all life on Earth is at risk) came during the recent [CERAWeek oil summit](#) in Houston, Texas, where executives from the world's leading fossil fuel companies said that we should "abandon the fantasy of phasing out oil and gas." Who from the likes of ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, BP and TotalEnergies gives a damn if the emissions from the burning of fossil fuels until 2050 causes [millions of deaths](#) before the end of the century? Oil and gas companies made [tens of billions](#) in annual net profit in 2023 as they continued to expand fossil fuel production.

Of course, none of the above is to suggest that the game is over. The rulers of the world (powerful states, huge corporations, and the financial elite) are always pulling out all the stops to resist change and maintain the status quo. But common people are fighting back, and history has repeatedly shown that they will never surrender to the forces of reaction and oppression. We have seen a remarkable escalation of climate and political activism in general over the past several years — indeed, a sharp awakening of global public consciousness to the interconnectedness of challenges in the 21st century that leaves much room for hope about the future. Struggles against climate change are connected to the fight against imperialism, inequality, poverty and injustice. These struggles are not in vain, even when the odds seem stacked against them. On the contrary, they have produced some remarkable results.

Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon rainforest is falling dramatically since [President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#) came into office — a victory not only for the Brazilian people but for those across the world who care about the environment and

justice. In North America, [Indigenous communities](#) scored major victories in 2023 in the struggle for conservation, protecting hundreds of thousands of acres of forest land and sacred and culturally significant sites from mining. Climate activists in [Europe and the U.S.](#) won major legal victories throughout 2023, such as the youth [victory](#) against the state of Montana. Similar climate litigation like [Juliana v. United States](#) is only expected to grow in 2024. As actor and climate activist Jane Fonda aptly put it on “Fire Drill Fridays,” a video program that was launched in 2019 by Fonda herself in collaboration with Greenpeace USA, “These lawsuits are not just legal maneuvers ... but are at the crux of climate reckoning.”

These victories for our planet are more than enough proof that activism pays off and should be an acute reminder that the kind of transformational change we need will not start at the top. In 2018, the climate protest of a 15-year-old Swedish student captured the imagination of her own country and eventually “aroused the world,” to use the words of British broadcaster and naturalist Sir David Attenborough. Indeed, just a year later, Greta Thunberg would be credited with leading the [biggest climate protest in history](#).

It is grassroots environmental activism that created the political space for President Joe Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act — the largest investment in clean energy and climate action in U.S. history. (It’s important to point out that the law stripped out many social and economic programs in the original draft that are critical for low-income communities and communities of color, and the law lacks a deep decarbonization pathway.) Environmental movements such as Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil, and Letzte Generation have sparked a global conversation on the climate crisis and have opened up new possibilities for forcing the transition away from fossil fuels across Europe even in the face of a growing backlash by hard-line conservative and far right groups, and even as European governments [crack down](#) on climate protests.

The rulers of the world won’t save the planet. They have a vested interest in maintaining the existing state of affairs, whether it be oppression of the weak or continued reliance on fossil fuels. Radical political action is our only hope because voting alone will never solve our problems. Organizing communities, raising awareness and educating the public, and developing convincing accounts of change are key elements for creating real progress in politics. Indeed, as the recent history of environmental politics shows, climate activism is the pathway to climate defense.

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