# Just Stop Oil co-founder Indigo Rumbelow jailed for 30 months in landmark public nuisance ruling



Last week, at Minshull Street crown court in Manchester, Indigo Rumbelow, a co-founder of Just Stop Oil, was sentenced to a staggering 30 months in prison for conspiring to intentionally cause a public nuisance. This sentence comes in the wake of claims by prosecutors that Rumbelow and her fellow activists aimed to obstruct the activities of Manchester airport. Despite the severe repercussions, Rumbelow steadfastly defends her actions, arguing that such nonviolent resistance is a necessary response to the climate crisis, which she describes as a matter of "life or death" for humanity.

The legal grounding for her conviction lies within the public nuisance laws established under the Criminal Law Act 1977 and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. Ironically, these laws were initially intended to hold large corporations accountable for environmental damage, such as air pollution and toxic waste dumping. Rumbelow's case embodies a troubling trend where legislation designed to protect public welfare is instead wielded against activists striving to highlight ecological crises. As she ascended the courtroom's steps to hear her fate, Rumbelow expressed that although her heart was heavy, her commitment to her cause remained unwavering.

In a courtroom marked by a visible power dynamic, Judge Jason MacAdam pronounced sentences that aimed to deter further civil disobedience. He underscored the need for remorse from Rumbelow and her co-defendants as a condition of their sentencing, stating that their deliberate choice to plead not guilty distinguished them from other activists who have historically embraced the legal ramifications of their protests. Rumbelow contends that this expectation of remorse is fundamentally flawed for those who act out of moral conviction. She recalls raising a banner that read "Oil Kills" at their arrest, emphasising that disrupting business as usual is justified by the dire need to address climate change.

The increasing severity of penalties for climate activists has prompted scrutiny and concern. In December 2023, police made over 630 arrests linked to climate protests in London, marking an escalation in the government's approach to managing dissent. Activists continue to face harsh sentences; for instance, five Just Stop Oil members received prison terms ranging from four to five years for disrupting traffic on the M25 motorway in late 2022. Such sentences have been characterised as the longest for non-violent expression in UK history, raising alarming questions about the balance between maintaining public order and respecting the right to protest.

The convictions of Rumbelow and her fellow activists have not only sparked outrage within environmental circles but also raised broader concerns regarding the erosion of democratic freedoms in the UK. A growing number of critics argue that these penalties serve as a disheartening precedent for drone activism, potentially chilling future protests. In an age of escalating climate emergencies, the response from law enforcement and the judiciary is increasingly seen as out of step with public sentiment. A majority of citizens polled believe the sentences handed down are excessively harsh, further complicating the societal landscape surrounding climate activism.

For Rumbelow, her time in prison will be a period of reflection and learning, as she commits to continuing her commitment to civil resistance, inspired by historical figures who faced similar repercussions in their fight for justice. Her unwavering stance pivots around the belief that to remain silent in the face of ecological devastation equates to complicity in the unacceptable suffering that unchecked climate change can inevitably cause. As she contemplates her role in this ongoing struggle, Rumbelow envisions holding accountable those responsible for what she describes as "the greatest crime ever committed against humanity".

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/03/climate-protest-jail-sentence-resistance-just-stop-oil), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/03/climate-protest-jail-sentence-resistance-just-stop-oil)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/03/climate-protest-jail-sentence-resistance-just-stop-oil), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/dec/15/just-stop-oil-activist-is-first-to-be-jailed-under-new-uk-protest-law), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/efa11ff6-555d-44a4-84f9-469e5e58c37d)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/04/police-arrest-climate-protesters-london), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/law/article/2024/jul/19/just-stop-oil-jail-terms-questions-harsh-treatment-protesters), [[7]](https://www.bigissue.com/news/activism/just-stop-oil-sentences-jail-terms-m25-backlash/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/law/article/2024/jul/19/just-stop-oil-jail-terms-questions-harsh-treatment-protesters), [[7]](https://www.bigissue.com/news/activism/just-stop-oil-sentences-jail-terms-m25-backlash/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/03/climate-protest-jail-sentence-resistance-just-stop-oil> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/03/climate-protest-jail-sentence-resistance-just-stop-oil> - In this opinion piece, Indigo Rumbelow, co-founder of Just Stop Oil, reflects on her 30-month prison sentence for conspiring to cause a public nuisance by obstructing planes at Manchester airport. She discusses the legal basis of the charge, the historical use of the public nuisance offence, and the judge's emphasis on remorse. Rumbelow argues that nonviolent resistance is essential in addressing the climate crisis and expresses her commitment to continue such actions despite the sentence.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/dec/15/just-stop-oil-activist-is-first-to-be-jailed-under-new-uk-protest-law> - Stephen Gingell, a 57-year-old Just Stop Oil activist, was sentenced to six months in prison for participating in a peaceful slow march protest in London. This marked the first imprisonment under the new Public Order Act, which criminalises interference with key national infrastructure. Gingell's arrest and sentencing highlight the UK's increasing crackdown on environmental protests and the legal challenges activists face under the new legislation.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/04/police-arrest-climate-protesters-london> - In December 2023, police in London arrested at least 630 climate protesters over a one-month period, utilising new powers under the government's anti-protest legislation. The mass arrests, which included multiple detentions of some individuals, were condemned by civil rights group Liberty as 'staggering and shocking.' The protests, primarily involving slow marching along roads, were a form of peaceful civil resistance against new oil and gas production.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/efa11ff6-555d-44a4-84f9-469e5e58c37d> - Five Just Stop Oil activists were sentenced to at least four years in prison for conspiring to cause a public nuisance by shutting down the M25 motorway during a protest in November 2022. The protest led to significant economic costs and traffic delays. Judge Christopher Hehir acknowledged the activists' environmental concerns but criticised their tactics as fanatical, highlighting the UK's stringent response to disruptive climate activism.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/article/2024/jul/19/just-stop-oil-jail-terms-questions-harsh-treatment-protesters> - The lengthy prison sentences handed to five Just Stop Oil activists for their roles in M25 protests have raised questions about the harsh treatment of protesters in the UK. The sentences, believed to be the longest ever meted out for non-violent protest, have prompted comparisons with other offences and suggestions they may breach the European Convention on Human Rights, highlighting concerns over the proportionality of sentencing in cases of peaceful protest.
7. <https://www.bigissue.com/news/activism/just-stop-oil-sentences-jail-terms-m25-backlash/> - The four- and five-year prison sentences handed to Just Stop Oil activists have been criticised as setting a 'terrible example for the rest of the world.' A majority of the public believes the sentences were too harsh, with academics warning that such punishments will do little to deter further protests. The sentences have also been condemned by international bodies, highlighting concerns over the erosion of democratic rights and freedoms in the UK.