# Protesters disrupt London Marathon men’s elite race on Tower Bridge with red powder



A dramatic incident unfolded at the London Marathon when two protesters from the group Youth Demand disrupted the men's elite race on Tower Bridge on Sunday morning. The protesters, Willow Holland, 18, from Bristol, and Cristy North, a live-in carer from Nottingham, jumped barriers and threw bright red powder onto the road in front of the lead runners, including Eliud Kipchoge, the world-renowned marathon champion.

The protest occurred shortly after 10:30am, coinciding with the passage of elite athletes vying for victory in the London Marathon, an event that attracted over 56,000 participants this year. The disruption forced the runners to manoeuvre carefully around the commotion, though the powder used was reported to be chalk-based and posed no hazard to the competitors.

The incident was swiftly contained by a heroic intervention from a London Marathon event staff member who was a passenger on a motorbike carrying race staff and camera crews. Eyewitness footage showed the man leaping off the motorbike and physically dragging both protesters to safety, away from the path of the runners. Metropolitan Police officers then moved in to detain Holland and North, who continued to throw powder during their arrest. They were taken into custody on suspicion of causing a public nuisance.

Youth Demand, an offshoot of the environmental group Just Stop Oil and composed of former members, students and Gen Z activists, stated their intention to "shut down" London through protests this summer. Their current demonstration targeted the UK government's trade and support relating to Israel with placards and t-shirts reading “Stop Arming Israel.” Holland explained in a statement released by the group, "I refuse to be complicit in a genocide funded by our politicians," citing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza as the motivation. Cristy North echoed these sentiments, condemning government policy on arming Israel and its breach of UK and international law.

The Metropolitan Police confirmed the protest and subsequent arrests and noted that the chalk-based powder was not anticipated to impede the runners’ safety. The men's elite race was ultimately won by Kenyan runner Sebastian Sawe, surpassing Kipchoge’s bid for a fifth title, while Ethiopia’s Tigst Assefa set a new women’s-only world record in the female elite race.

The London Marathon, first held in 1981, is one of the world’s largest marathons, and this year could set a new record with 56,000 entrants — surpassing the current record of 55,646 finishers in the New York Marathon. The event features a wide range of participants, including elite athletes, celebrity runners, and amateurs, many running for charitable causes.

Alongside the competitive and philanthropic aspects of the marathon, the event has seen ongoing debate relating to the participation of transgender athletes. Despite a recent UK Supreme Court ruling affirming that a woman should be defined by biological sex in the Equality Act, organisers have allowed trans women to compete in the mass participation event under their self-identified gender. This decision has drawn criticism from some former Olympians and women’s rights campaigners who argue it conflicts with the law and fair competition in women’s sports. Hugh Brasher, the race director, responded to concerns by highlighting that the mass participation race is not competitive in the traditional sense but a personal challenge.

The marathon also featured a broad spectrum of runners, from the youngest at 18 years old to participants over 80, including six men who have run every London Marathon since its inception. Noteworthy competitors included bereaved parents raising funds in memory of their children, television stars such as Emmerdale actor Tony Audenshaw and actress Lisa McGrillis, as well as other public figures and MPs.

Held on a bright, sunny day with temperatures reaching 22C, the marathon continues to be a significant cultural and charitable event in London, drawing huge crowds to support the runners. The 2025 race also coincided with the adidas Manchester Marathon, which attracted another 36,000 participants.

As the event concluded, the memory of the protest highlighted the intersection of sport, politics and activism on the global stage, while the runners’ achievements and charitable efforts underscored the marathon’s enduring spirit.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/london-marathon-police-protest-paint-b2740302.html> - This article confirms the identities of the protesters (Willow Holland from Bristol and Cristy North from Nottingham), describes them throwing red powder onto the road during the men's elite race at around 10:35am on Tower Bridge, and includes statements from Youth Demand concerning their motivations related to Gaza and UK government policy.
2. <https://news.sky.com/story/protesters-throw-powder-on-tower-bridge-during-london-marathon-13356723> - Sky News reports on two protesters from Youth Demand throwing red powder on Tower Bridge during the London Marathon elite men's race and their swift arrest by City of London police, along with mention of t-shirts stating 'Stop Arming Israel' supporting the political cause.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-04-27/pro-palestine-protesters-hurl-red-powder-during-london-marathon> - ITV News details the protest where two pro-Palestine activists threw red powder at the London Marathon, includes quotes from Willow Holland explaining the protest aims related to Gaza, the reaction from the Met Police, and confirms that the elite men's race was able to continue without obstruction.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-marathon-chaos-tower-bridge-youth-demand-arrests-b1224533.html> - The Evening Standard reports on the chaos at the London Marathon caused by Youth Demand activists throwing red powder on Tower Bridge, their subsequent arrests, and the disruption caused during the men's elite race.
5. <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/uk/youth-demand-marathon-massive-sacrifice/> - LBC News discusses Youth Demand's defense of the activists’ actions, naming Willow Holland and Cristy North, describing the red powder thrown and arrest on suspicion of causing a public nuisance, and elaborates on the group’s motivations and planned summer protests against UK government support for Israel.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/sport/athletics/65385395> - BBC Sport provides race results confirming that Kenyan Sebastian Sawe won the men's elite London Marathon, denying Eliud Kipchoge a fifth title, and mentions Ethiopia’s Tigst Assefa setting a new women's-only world record, corroborating the marathon outcomes stated.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14652717/Brave-act-hero-bystander-foiled-Youth-Demands-plot-RUIN-London-Marathon.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data