# Just Stop Oil co-founder sentenced under public nuisance laws amid climate protest crackdown



Last week, at Minshull Street Crown Court in Manchester, I received a two-and-a-half-year prison sentence for conspiring to cause a public nuisance—a charge stemming from my involvement with Just Stop Oil, aimed at obstructing air traffic at Manchester Airport. The prosecution argued that the intent of our actions was to "obstruct the public... in the exercise or enjoyment of a right that may be exercised or enjoyed by the public at large." I fully acknowledge that I intended to cause such an obstruction, but I stand by my conviction that these actions were necessary, given the dire state of our climate crisis.

The offence of public nuisance, as defined under the Criminal Law Act 1977 and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, was originally designed to address serious environmental harm caused by corporations. Historically, it has sought to punish those who threaten public health through pollution. Ironically, this same legal framework is now being wielded against individuals striving to safeguard the future of our planet. My sentiment echoes the feeling that the state is repurposing laws designed for environmental protection to silence those demanding change.

During my time in custody, I grappled with feelings of fear and frustration as I awaited my sentencing. In the dimly lit courtroom, the weight of the judgment became palpable as the judge, Jason MacAdam, imposed varying terms of imprisonment on my fellow activists and me—18 to 30 months, depending on individual involvement. His rationale was clear: to serve as a deterrent to those contemplating similar nonviolent resistance. While I deeply contest many aspects of the ruling, I find a certain grim agreement with the judge's recognition that I prioritised my cause above societal inconvenience.

Disrupting operations at Manchester Airport was not about causing chaos; rather, it was about making a moral statement in the face of impending disaster. We operated under the weight of scientific evidence that underscores the urgency for immediate action against climate change. When we were arrested, we carried a banner declaring "Oil Kills," and upon receiving our sentences, we raised signs proclaiming, "Billions will die." I maintain that the climate crisis is a matter of life or death, and such disruption is not only warranted but essential.

The judge's expectation that I show remorse for my acts of conscience strikes me as fundamentally misplaced. How can one feel regret for actions taken to prevent imminent harm? My defence, which sought to argue that I acted out of necessity, was dismissed by the court, and the judge's critique of my plea of not guilty separates me from others who have historically stood up for their beliefs—like Nelson Mandela and the Quakers who protested in the 17th century.

In his judgement, MacAdam suggested that it is misguided to believe that personal convictions justify breaking the law. Yet history teaches us that many social and political movements have challenged existing norms in just this way, aiming to escalate the urgency of their messages. Just Stop Oil is driven not by a desire for fanfare but by the necessity of confronting a growing existential threat. Our approach adapts to current conditions, and we do not engage in passive protests; we seek to incite a conversation about responsibility and obligation.

As I spend my time incarcerated, I am committed to the tradition of civil disobedience that acknowledges the legal consequences of its actions. I will use this period to reflect on historical acts of resistance and to understand the struggles of those who have come before us. Each day, I consider how to demand accountability from those who have perpetrated what could be termed humanity's greatest crime—inaction in the face of overwhelming evidence about climate change.

Indigo Rumbelow is a co-founder of Just Stop Oil and is currently serving her sentence at HMP Styal.

### 📌 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/article/2024/jul/18/five-just-stop-oil-supporters-jailed-over-protest-that-blocked-m25), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c880xjx54mpo)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://edition.cnn.com/2024/07/18/climate/just-stop-oil-prison-sentence-intl-latam/index.html), [[6]](https://edition.cnn.com/2024/09/14/climate/uk-climate-protests-policing-laws-prison-intl/), [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/efa11ff6-555d-44a4-84f9-469e5e58c37d)
* Paragraph 4 – [[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), [[6]](https://edition.cnn.com/2024/09/14/climate/uk-climate-protests-policing-laws-prison-intl/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/03/climate-protest-jail-sentence-resistance-just-stop-oil), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/jul/18/five-just-stop-oil-supporters-jailed-over-protest-that-blocked-m25), [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/efa11ff6-555d-44a4-84f9-469e5e58c37d)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/03/climate-protest-jail-sentence-resistance-just-stop-oil), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c880xjx54mpo), [[5]](https://edition.cnn.com/2024/07/18/climate/just-stop-oil-prison-sentence-intl-latam/index.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[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), [[6]](https://edition.cnn.com/2024/09/14/climate/uk-climate-protests-policing-laws-prison-intl/)

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## 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 two-and-a-half-year prison sentence for conspiring to cause a public nuisance by obstructing Manchester Airport. She discusses the historical use of the public nuisance offence against environmental harm and critiques its application against environmental protesters. Rumbelow emphasizes the necessity of nonviolent resistance in addressing the climate crisis and questions the expectation of remorse for actions taken out of moral obligation to prevent harm.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/jul/18/five-just-stop-oil-supporters-jailed-over-protest-that-blocked-m25> - Five Just Stop Oil activists were sentenced to prison for orchestrating protests that disrupted the M25 motorway in November 2022. Roger Hallam received a five-year sentence, while the others received four years each. The judge described their actions as crossing the line from concerned campaigning to fanaticism. The sentences are among the longest ever imposed for non-violent protest in the UK, highlighting the government's stringent approach to disruptive demonstrations.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c880xjx54mpo> - Five environmental activists from Just Stop Oil were jailed for their roles in protests that brought parts of the M25 motorway to a standstill over four days. The protests involved activists climbing gantries, leading to significant traffic disruptions. Judge Christopher Hehir stated that the activists had 'crossed the line from concerned campaigner to fanatic.' The sentences are the longest since the introduction of the new law of conspiracy to cause a public nuisance, aimed at curbing disruptive protests.
5. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/07/18/climate/just-stop-oil-prison-sentence-intl-latam/index.html> - Five Just Stop Oil activists received prison sentences ranging from four to five years for conspiring to block the M25 motorway in November 2022. The sentences are among the longest in the UK's history for non-violent protest. The judge justified the lengthy terms due to the activists' previous convictions and the significant disruption caused. The case has sparked criticism from environmental agencies and human rights groups, who view the sentences as disproportionate and a threat to the right to protest.
6. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/09/14/climate/uk-climate-protests-policing-laws-prison-intl/> - This article discusses the imprisonment of Just Stop Oil activists for their climate protests, highlighting the severe penalties faced by environmental campaigners in the UK. It examines the legal framework under which these activists were prosecuted, including the Public Order Act 2023, and the broader implications for the right to protest. The piece also features perspectives from the activists themselves, who argue that their actions are a necessary response to the climate crisis, and critiques the government's approach to environmental activism.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/efa11ff6-555d-44a4-84f9-469e5e58c37d> - Five Just Stop Oil activists in the UK were sentenced to at least four years in prison for conspiracy to cause a public nuisance by shutting down the M25 motorway during a protest in November 2022. The protest resulted in significant economic costs and traffic delays. Judge Christopher Hehir acknowledged their environmental concerns but criticized their tactics as fanatical. These sentences are the longest under a new public nuisance law aimed at curbing disruptive protests, highlighting harsher judicial responses and legislative measures against climate activism.