# Judge’s harsh sentencing of Just Stop Oil co-founder sparks fears of crackdown on climate dissent



Last week, Minshull Street Crown Court in Manchester handed down an overreaching jail sentence to Indigo Rumbelow, a co-founder of Just Stop Oil, for her role in climate protest activities aimed at disrupting operations at Manchester Airport. The prosecution accused Rumbelow and her fellow activists of conspiring to cause a public nuisance, a charge that appears politically motivated and designed to suppress dissent against the Labour government's failure to tackle the climate crisis effectively.

The charge of public nuisance, which traditionally served to hold corporations accountable for environmental harm, has been cynically weaponised against activists daring to challenge a system that continues to threaten our environment. Rumbelow highlighted the ironic twist that the same law meant to protect communities is now being used to silence voices advocating for a sustainable future.

After spending nine long months on remand, Rumbelow and three other activists received harsh sentences ranging from 18 to 30 months. The presiding judge, Jason MacAdam, claimed these “deterrent” sentences aimed to instil fear in potential dissenters—a blatant attempt to cow individuals from speaking out against government inaction. Rumbelow's passionate assertion that the climate crisis is a critical issue endangering lives globally underscores her resolve. She stated, “We set out to disrupt the planes at Manchester airport because history shows that resistance can be a catalyst for change.” Her poignant display during sentencing, where she raised signs proclaiming “Billions will die,” reveals the urgency that the current government seems to neglect.

A pivotal moment during Rumbelow's trial was her refusal to plead guilty, which Judge MacAdam condemned as distancing her from a tradition of civil disobedience. This notion itself raises questions; rather than accepting what seems like a politically charged punishment, Rumbelow correctly viewed her actions as a moral intervention against a system directly complicit in environmental degradation. Both she and the judge diverged on the concept of moral responsibility yet shared an undeniable recognition of the urgency behind these protests.

The disproportionate sentences handed down to Just Stop Oil activists have sparked rightful outrage, with comparisons being drawn to far more violent national and international offences—further highlighting a troubling trend under the new Labour administration. Critics argue that this approach impedes core democratic principles and infringes upon rights guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights. The government’s heavy-handed tactics not only undermine civil liberties but also reflect a profound disinterest in engaging with the pressing issues of our time.

Reflecting on her experience, Rumbelow expressed a desire to explore the history of civil resistance against oppressive systems and highlight an ethical duty to confront the dire threats posed by environmental negligence. She rightly believes that inaction is akin to complicity in the worsening climate crisis, a sentiment that many critics of the current government share as they call for urgent action.

Rumbelow's ordeal underscores the broader implications of climate activism and the growing tension between civil liberties and state-imposed restrictions. While she remains unjustly incarcerated, her unwavering commitment to advocacy serves as a testament to the escalating lengths activists must go to in order to challenge an administration seemingly indifferent to the climate emergency.

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/environment/2025/mar/07/just-stop-oil-protesters-jail-sentences-shortened-after-appeal> - In March 2025, the UK's most senior judge reduced the sentences of six Just Stop Oil activists, including co-founder Roger Hallam, after an appeal deemed their original terms 'manifestly excessive'. Hallam's sentence was reduced from five to four years, while others received shorter terms. The activists had been convicted for conspiring to disrupt traffic by climbing onto gantries over the M25 motorway in 2022. The ruling highlights the court's recognition of the activists' conscientious motivations and the need to balance protest rights with public order.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/article/2024/jul/19/just-stop-oil-jail-terms-questions-harsh-treatment-protesters> - In July 2024, five Just Stop Oil activists received lengthy prison sentences for planning to block the M25 motorway. Roger Hallam was sentenced to five years, and four others to four years each. These sentences are believed to be the longest ever given in the UK for non-violent protest. The severity has sparked widespread criticism, with comparisons drawn to other offences and concerns about potential breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/jul/18/five-just-stop-oil-supporters-jailed-over-protest-that-blocked-m25> - In July 2024, five Just Stop Oil activists were sentenced for conspiring to cause public nuisance by planning to block the M25 motorway. Roger Hallam received a five-year sentence, while the others received four years each. The judge stated they had 'crossed the line from concerned campaigner to fanatic'. The sentences are considered the longest ever given in the UK for non-violent protest, raising questions about the proportionality of sentencing in such cases.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/article/2024/jul/19/just-stop-oil-jail-terms-questions-harsh-treatment-protesters> - In July 2024, five Just Stop Oil activists received lengthy prison sentences for planning to block the M25 motorway. Roger Hallam was sentenced to five years, and four others to four years each. These sentences are believed to be the longest ever given in the UK for non-violent protest. The severity has sparked widespread criticism, with comparisons drawn to other offences and concerns about potential breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/article/2024/jul/19/just-stop-oil-jail-terms-questions-harsh-treatment-protesters> - In July 2024, five Just Stop Oil activists received lengthy prison sentences for planning to block the M25 motorway. Roger Hallam was sentenced to five years, and four others to four years each. These sentences are believed to be the longest ever given in the UK for non-violent protest. The severity has sparked widespread criticism, with comparisons drawn to other offences and concerns about potential breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/article/2024/jul/19/just-stop-oil-jail-terms-questions-harsh-treatment-protesters> - In July 2024, five Just Stop Oil activists received lengthy prison sentences for planning to block the M25 motorway. Roger Hallam was sentenced to five years, and four others to four years each. These sentences are believed to be the longest ever given in the UK for non-violent protest. The severity has sparked widespread criticism, with comparisons drawn to other offences and concerns about potential breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights.