

# CLIMATE ACTIVISTS AND FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

---

In recent years, the right to freedom of assembly has increasingly been restricted. A clear example is the frequent prosecution and conviction of climate activists who engage in peaceful demonstrations. The UN Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders has noted that a growing number of environmental defenders in Sweden are being fined for participating in peaceful protests, with the amounts of these fines increasing. Furthermore, government officials and other politicians have increasingly labelled climate activists and other peaceful demonstrators as security threats and a threat to democracy.

Since 2022, prosecutors have begun to prosecute climate activists for the serious crime of sabotage for acts that were previously considered misdemeanours. In light of this development, scholars and legal professionals have criticised the application of the sabotage provision to the exercise of freedom of assembly.

Given that current legal application has suddenly and unexpectedly led to the use of the sabotage provision to hinder peaceful demonstrations, there is a need to review the legislation to explicitly exempt freedom of assembly from the scope of criminal liability.

## Recommendation

- Clarify the wording of the sabotage provision in the Criminal Code to explicitly state that all peaceful expressions of opinion are exempt from criminal liability.
- Refrain from depicting climate activists and peaceful protests as threats against democracy and public security.



← READ OUR  
FULL REPORT

If you have questions or are curious to learn more,  
reach out to us on [legal@crd.org](mailto:legal@crd.org).