

'It's our time to rise up': youth climate strikes held in 100 countries

Sunday 17 March 2019, by [HURST Daniel](#), [LAVILLE Sandra](#), [TAYLOR Matthew](#) (Date first published: 15 March 2019).

School and university students continue Friday protests to call for political action on crisis.

From Australia to America, children put down their books on Friday to march for change in the first global climate strike.

The event was embraced in the developing nations of India and Uganda and in the Philippines and Nepal - countries acutely impacted by climate change - as tens of thousands of schoolchildren and students in more than 100 countries went on "strike", demanding the political elite urgently address what they say is a climate emergency.

In Sydney, where about 30,000 children and young people marched from the Town Hall Square to Hyde Park, university student Xander De Vries, 20, said: "It's our time to rise up. We don't have a lot of time left; it's us who have to make a change so I thought it would be important to be here and show support to our generation."

Coordinated via social media by volunteers in 125 countries and regions, the action spread across more than 2,000 events under the banner of Fridays for Future.

As dusk fell in the antipodes, the baton was passed to Asia, where small groups of Indian students went on strike for the first time.

In Delhi, more than 200 children walked out of classes to protest against inaction on tackling climate change, and similar protests took place on a smaller scale in 30 towns and cities. Vidit Baya, 17, who is in his last year at MDS public school in Udaipur, said: "In India, no one talks about climate change. You don't see it on the news or in the papers or hear about it from government.

"This was our first strike as a nation and there were young people taking strike action in many cities. It is a fledgling movement but we are very happy with our action today. We are trying to get people to be more aware of climate change and the need to tackle it."

Across Africa, there were strikes in several countries. In Uganda, Kampala international student Hilda Nakabuye addressed striking students in the capital.

In Johannesburg, pupils from St James preparatory school added their voices to the global demand for governments to act.

In Sweden, youngsters gathered in Stockholm's central square to hear 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, the girl whose single-minded determination has inspired millions of people around the world and earned a nomination this week for the Nobel peace prize.

When she appeared, the crowd chanted her name and she earned cheers and applause by telling them: "We have been born into this world and we have to live with this crisis, and our children and our grandchildren. We are facing the greatest existential crisis humanity has ever faced. And yet it has been ignored. You who have ignored it know who you are."

Political leaders in some countries criticised the strikes. In Australia, the education minister, Dan Tehan, said: "Students leaving school during school hours to protest is not something that we should encourage." The UK's education secretary, Damian Hinds, claimed the disruption increased teachers' workloads and wasted lesson time.

But young people brushed off the criticism [1].

Jean Hinchcliffe, 14, striking in Sydney, said on the Today programme: "I have been really frustrated and really angry about the fact I don't have a voice in politics and I don't have a voice in the climate conversation when my politicians are pretty much refusing to do anything ... So I decided to strike and ... suddenly us kids are being listened to and that's why we continue to strike and feel it's so important."

In the UK, where an estimated 10,000 young people gathered in London and thousands more took to the streets in Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as other towns and cities, the environment secretary, Michael Gove, broke ranks with Hinds and praised the action in a video message with other Conservative MPs [2].

"Collective action of the kind you're championing can make a difference and a profound one," Gove said. "Together we can beat climate change."

"It will require us to change the way in which our energy is generated, change the way in which our homes are built, change the way in which our land is managed and farming operates. But that change is absolutely necessary."

In Tokyo, young people had earlier marched through the city's Shibuya scramble crossing as part of the climate strike. About 130 people - including school and university students and other supporters - joined in the march, which started at the United Nations university and wound its way through the streets of the capital, including the busy Omotesando shopping street.

One of the organisers, Ten Maekawa, 20, led the crowd in chants of: "What do we want? Climate justice! When do we want it? Now!"

Maekawa said he believed it was important for youth to mobilise on the issue: "In 2030, the Earth will be in danger because of climate change. They're responsible for the future, so it's very important for the young generation to speak up about climate change."

In Florida, Marcela Mulholland, a 21-year-old student who in her lifetime has witnessed how rising sea levels are threatening her home and community, urged young people across the world to continue their campaign. "There's no better way to find hope and meaning in this trying time than working alongside fellow people who share my grief for the world," she said.

Elsewhere in the United States, young people carried hand painted signs sporting their own slogans: "Denial is not a policy" and "fight now or swim later".

More than a hundred students marched across the Capitol's lawn in DC, chanting "What do we want? Climate action. When do we want it? Now," and were urged on by speakers organised by the Youth Climate Strike US. "It is time the world listens to these young people and pays attention to

what we're asking for," said 16-year-old Maddy Fernands, the group's press director.

The speakers included Minneapolis resident Isra Hirsi, the 16-year-old daughter of Ilhan Omar, one of the first two Muslim women elected to Congress in 2018.

"Yes, we are at a dark moment in our history, but we are the light that can bring change," Hirsi told the crowd. "We must end the extraction of the dirtiest fossil fuel in the world and keep it in the ground."

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- Additional reporting by David Crouch in Sweden

P.S.

- The Guardian. Fri 15 Mar 2019 17.28 GMT First published on Fri 15 Mar 2019 14.10 GMT:
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/15/its-our-time-to-rise-up-youth-climate-strikes-held-in-100-countries>
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Footnotes

- [1] <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/15/young-climate-activists-striking-today-campaigners>
- [2] https://twitter.com/cen_hq/status/1106257312849772544