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Russia Hit With First Climate Lawsuit

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Russian climate activists have filed the country's first-ever lawsuit demanding stronger government action toward the climate crisis, The Guardian reported Tuesday.

Russia, the world's fourth-largest greenhouse gas emitter, is warming twice as fast as the planet as a whole — a trend that is already fueling major environmental disasters like wildfires, floods and permafrost melt.

The lawsuit, filed with the Supreme Court, argues that Russia's government is "violating the Russian Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights" and putting hundreds of thousands of lives at risk by failing to implement stronger emissions-reduction measures.

It calls on the government to take steps to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions in line with the 2015 Paris climate accords, which aim to keep warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

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Russia has faced criticism for relying on the emissions baseline year of 1990 — when nearly all heavy industry halted due to the Soviet collapse — meaning the country can meet its climate goals without making radical emissions reductions.

“The Russian government’s approach to climate change is irresponsible and contrary to its international law obligations,” said Grigory Vaypan, the spokesperson for the activists’ legal team.

The lawsuit was filed by activists from a variety of groups including school strikers from Fridays for Future, senior figures from climate NGOs such as Ecodefense and the Russian Socio-Ecological Union, and indigenous rights activists.

The Russian government’s long-term climate strategy approved last October aims to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2060.

Russian climate activist Arshak Makichyan, who moved to Germany after Russia invaded Ukraine, told The Guardian he was skeptical that the present government’s promises on climate change will lead to sufficient action.

“We keep lying to ourselves — they’re not going to do anything. It’s the same government as 20 years ago.”

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