

Dutch court rejects Shell bid to ban Greenpeace protests

October 5 2012



Greenpeace activists stand near a stuffed polar bear at a Shell gasoline station in the central Dutch town of Breukelen on September 14 to protest against drilling in the Arctic sea. A Dutch court on Friday rejected a bid by oil multinational Royal Dutch Shell to ban Greenpeace from protesting near its property on pain of a massive fine, saying such groups had a right to inform the public.

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"Future [Greenpeace](#) actions against Shell cannot be banned in advance provided that they remain in a certain framework," the Amsterdam court ruling said in response to Shell's September 21 suit.

"The judge took as starting point that organisations such as Greenpeace

are in principle free to carry out actions to let the public know about their point of view," it added.

Shell had sought a ban on any Greenpeace protests in the Netherlands within 500 metres (yards) of its operations, including petrol stations or offices, with a one one million euro (\$1.2 million) fine in default.

The [environmental group](#) has organised several protests against Shell's [exploratory drilling](#) in the Arctic, including on September 14 using bicycle locks to shut down pumps at more than 60 filling stations in the Netherlands.

"The mere fact that such an action causes nuisance or loss for the business targeted by the action, in this case Shell, does not makes such an action illegal," the court ruled.

It added however that Greenpeace protests should not prevent customers being able to buy petrol for more than an hour or prevent Shell gaining access to its sites for more than two hours.

"Shell's latest attempt to silence its critics has failed," Greenpeace International Executive Director Kumi Naidoo said in a statement.

"The judge rejected the majority of this injunction and has reminded the company that civil disobedience is a right in democracies, even when its business is impacted."

Shell spokesman Lukas Burgering said: "We are pleased that Greenpeace actions such as those of September 14 are now bound by strict conditions."

"We recognise Greenpeace's right to express their opinion but we are pleased that the judges agreed with us," he told AFP.

Shell said last month that it was delaying until next year exploratory drilling for oil in offshore Alaska after suffering damage to a dome used to contain any potential spills.

[Shell](#)'s search for oil in the region is facing deep opposition from environmentalists, who worry that an oil spill could have devastating effects on the pristine Arctic environment.

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Citation: Dutch court rejects Shell bid to ban Greenpeace protests (2012, October 5) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-10-dutch-court-shell-greenpeace-protests.html>

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