

Dutch citizens sue government over climate change

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Around 900 Dutch citizens take their government to court in a bid to force a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and take action against climate change

Around 900 Dutch citizens on Tuesday took their government to court in a bid to force a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and take action against climate change.

"We want the Dutch government to reduce [greenhouse gas emissions](#) by

40 percent by 2020 compared to 1990 levels," said Majan Missemma, head of rights group Urgenda which is coordinating the [legal action](#).

The group says the case is the first in Europe in which citizens attempt to hold a state responsible for its potentially devastating inaction and the first in the world in which human rights are used as a legal basis to protect citizens against [climate change](#).

The plaintiffs have asked judges to rule that a rise in global temperatures of over two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) would be a human rights infraction.

The international community has agreed to peg global warming to 2C over pre-industrial levels.

More than 200 of the citizens who brought the suit attended the first hearing in The Hague on Tuesday, including teachers, business people, musicians and artists.

There has been increasing interest in using lawsuits against governments and companies to press for action on climate change over the last decade.

Countries are to publish their own undertakings to reduce [greenhouse gas](#) emissions ahead of a hoped-for global deal to be agreed in Paris in December.

The 28-member European Union has said it will reduce emissions by 40 percent compared to 1990 levels by 2030, while the world's second largest polluter after China, the United States, has said it wants to reduce emissions by between 26-28 percent by 2025.

"We can't wait for politicians to reach agreement, we need urgent

action" said Minnesma.

"Sometimes a court can end a great abuse despite the existing political status quo," she said.

A court ruling possibly forcing the Dutch government to prioritise reducing greenhouse [gas emissions](#) is expected on June 24.

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