

Families from 8 countries sue EU over climate change

May 24 2018, by Amélie Bottollier-Depois, With Afp Bureaus In Europe



The Antisana volcano glacier east of Quito, Ecuador, is melting rapidly, one more sign of the massive changes global warming is having around the world

Ten families from Europe, Kenya, and Fiji have filed suit against the European Union over global warming threats to their homes and

livelihoods, their lawyers said Thursday.

They insist the bloc must do more to limit [climate change](#) caused by greenhouse gas emissions, and point to drought, glacier melt, [sea level rise](#) and flooding that will worsen as temperatures rise.

The plaintiffs before the European Court of Justice are "families living near the coast, families owning forests in Portugal, families in the mountains that see the glaciers melting, families in the north that are affected by permafrost melting," their lawyer Roda Verheyen told AFP.

They "are already being impacted by climate change, already incurring damage... and they are saying: 'EU, you have to do what you can to protect us because otherwise our damage will be catastrophic'," Verheyen said.

The claim, nicknamed the "People's Climate Case", is the first of its kind brought against the EU, the group's lawyers said.

Previously, suits were filed in a bid to pressure individual governments to take tougher climate action.

In Paris in 2015, the world's nations agreed to limit average global warming to under two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

This would be achieved by limiting emissions of planet-warming gases emitted by burning fossil fuels coal, oil and gas.

Under the pact, nations submitted voluntary emissions-cutting pledges. But these are forecast to still leave the planet on track for warming of 3.0 C—a level scientists warn will entail more frequent super-storms, longer droughts and an island-swallowing rise in the sea level.

The average global temperature has already climbed about 1.0 C, researchers said.

The EU has pledged to reduce [greenhouse gas emissions](#) to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

But the plaintiffs claim the goal is inadequate to protect "their fundamental rights such as the right to life, health, property, and occupation," according to the Climate Action Network (CAN) lobby group backing the court bid.



Maurice Feschet, lavender producer from the South of France, one of the plaintiffs who filed a suit against the European Union over threats to their homes and livelihoods caused by global warming

World leader?

Petru Vlad, a 50-year-old father of three who farms 100 sheep and a dozen cows in the mountains of central Romania, complains about dwindling water supplies due to changing rainfall patterns.

"There is no more water," he told AFP.

And the vegetation his herd feeds on has also changed. "Now there is only grass with tough roots better able to survive the drought," he said.

"Through this case, I am not seeking to be compensated, but mainly to alert the authorities in the EU of the situation," added Armando Carvalho, a Portuguese forester who saw all his trees destroyed by wildfires in 2017.

Wildfires are predicted to become more commonplace as forest cover dries out in an ever warmer world.

"The EU carries responsibility for these issues as a world leader," insisted Carvalho.

The 30-odd plaintiffs want the Luxembourg-based court to compel the EU and its member states to significantly upgrade a number of emissions-curbing directives.

They include a family from the Italian Alps which has seen its ice-climbing tourist business dwindle due to warmer winters, another from a German island disappearing under rising ocean waters, and a group of Sweden's indigenous Sami herders whose reindeer struggle to cope with ever-higher temperatures.

Reindeer feed on lichen and moss that grow under light, grainy snow.

With warmer temperatures in the Arctic there is more snow, which compacts into a hard layer on the ground, meaning the animals cannot get to their food.

The group also includes a family from Kenya affected by desertification, and Fijians plagued by seasonal cyclones and declining fisheries due to coral bleaching.

"Climate change is felt everywhere in the world, there's a global responsibility," CAN representative Wendel Trio said of the decision to include non-European plaintiffs.

It could be several months before the court announces whether it will hear the case, officially submitted on Wednesday.

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Citation: Families from 8 countries sue EU over climate change (2018, May 24) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-05-families-countries-sue-eu-climate.html>

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