

'I want snow for Christmas:' Students demand climate action

March 29 2019, by Frank Jordans



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, center in first row behind the banner, attends the 'Friday For Future' rally in Berlin, Germany, Friday, March 29, 2019. Thousands of students are gathering in the German capital, skipping school to take part in a rally demanding action against climate change. (Michael Kappeler/dpa via AP)

Thousands of students skipped school in Berlin Friday as part of a growing worldwide youth movement demanding faster action against

climate change.

Carrying signs with slogans such as "I want snow for Christmas" and "The climate is changing, why aren't we?", the demonstrators gathered in a park near the capital's main train station before marching through the government district.

Police estimated the size of the crowd at more than 20,000.

Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, who inspired the protests in Germany and elsewhere by staging weekly "school strikes," headlined the demonstration, joining others at the rally shouting: "What do we want? Climate justice. When do we want it? Now!"

Later, taking the stage in front of the landmark Brandenburg Gate, the 16-year-old told the animated crowd that "older generations have failed tackling the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced."

"When we say to them we are worried about the future of our civilization, they just pat us on our heads and say everything will be fine, don't worry," she said. "But we should worry—we should panic—and by panic I don't mean running around screaming; by panic I mean stepping out of our comfort zones because when you're in a crisis you change your behavior."



Students attend a protest rally of the 'Friday For Future Movement in Berlin, Germany, Friday, March 29, 2019. Thousands of students are gathering in the German capital, skipping school to take part in a rally demanding action against climate change. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

The crowd applauded wildly and chanted "Greta, Greta" as she wrapped up her short speech and left the stage. Thunberg later met with scientists at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, just outside the German capital.

Some 26,000 scientists in German-speaking countries have signed a call in support of the protesting students in recent weeks.

"The young people are right to say that this is about intergenerational justice," said the Potsdam Institute's director, Johan Rockstrom.

"Science clearly shows that climate action today, or the lack thereof,

defines the world our children and grandchildren will have to live in."

The Berlin rally was one of more than 20 being held around the country.



Students attend a protest rally of the 'Friday For Future Movement in Berlin, Germany, Friday, March 29, 2019. Thousands of students are gathering in the German capital, skipping school to take part in a rally demanding action against climate change. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

Protester Gabriele Konradi brought her 7-year-old daughter Valerie to the protest and they were part of a group holding signs like "change the system, not the climate."

Valerie said she hoped "people will not produce so much garbage anymore."

The weekly "Fridays for Future" protests have been largely welcomed by German politicians, although some have criticized students for protesting during school time.

One protester addressed the grievance with a sign saying: "I'll go to school, if you keep the planet cool."



Students attend a protest rally of the 'Friday For Future Movement in Berlin, Germany, Friday, March 29, 2019. Thousands of students are gathering in the German capital, skipping school to take part in a rally demanding action against climate change.(AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

While Chancellor Angela Merkel has called the protests "a very good initiative," many at the rally accused her government of failing to do enough to stop global warming.

"Angela Merkel, do you climate homework!" read one sign.

Environment Ministry spokesman Stephan Gabriel Haufe denied that Germany is dragging its feet on climate action, saying the government plans to pass a bill this year laying out new targets for each sector of the economy to reduce its emissions by 2030.

Unless emissions of heat-trapping gases start dropping dramatically, scientists estimate that the protesters will be in their 40s and 50s, maybe even 30s, when the world will reach the dangerous levels of warming that international climate agreements are trying to prevent.



A young girl attends a protest rally of the 'Friday For Future Movement' in Berlin, Germany, Friday, March 29, 2019. Thousands of students are gathering in the German capital, skipping school to take part in a rally demanding action against climate change. (Kay Nietfeld/dpa via AP)

Thunberg started last year holding solitary demonstrations outside the Swedish parliament to urge quicker, stronger actions to fight climate change. Inspired by her effort, the weekly protests have now snowballed from a handful of cities to hundreds, though many draw smaller crowds than took part Friday in Berlin.

"The young people who are standing here and demonstrating everywhere in Germany now can definitely make a difference, and also will be seen by the politicians," said Felix Osebold, a 19-year-old student protesting in Berlin. "It can't be that nothing is happening."



Private security guards controls media at the beginning of the Students 'Friday For Future' rally with Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, in Berlin, Germany, Friday, March 29, 2019. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, center in first row behind the banner, attends the 'Friday For Future' rally in Berlin, Germany, Friday, March 29, 2019. Thousands of students are gathering in the German capital, skipping school to take part in a rally demanding action against climate change. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, center, lifts her sign which reads 'school strike for the climate' as she attends the 'Friday For Future' rally in Berlin, Germany, Friday, March 29, 2019. Thousands of students are gathering in the German capital, skipping school to take part in a rally demanding action against climate change. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

© 2019 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: 'I want snow for Christmas!' Students demand climate action (2019, March 29)
 retrieved 26 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2019-03-christmas-students-demand-climate-action.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.