

Climate researcher rejects being sacked for refusing to fly

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A climate researcher hit back against his dismissal from a German think-tank after refusing to take a flight back from a fact-finding mission in Papua New Guinea.

Gianluca Grimalda was informed of his dismissal in mid-October by his employer, the Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IfW Kiel), in a letter seen by AFP on Friday.

No reason for the termination was given in the letter.

A few days before, the 51-year-old social scientist had received an ultimatum from the institute, insisting he return to Germany by plane.

"I'm not going to catch a plane because for me it's unreasonable," Grimalda told AFP, who refused the demand to travel.

The [carbon emissions](#) from the return [flight](#) back would have been greater than those of an [average person](#) over an entire year, said Grimalda.

The Italian national spent the best part of the last six months investigating the social impacts of climate change on communities in Papua New Guinea.

Grimalda, who is a member of the climate activist group Scientist Rebellion, had traveled most of the way to the Pacific island state by land and sea.

Around two-thirds of the 22,000-kilometer (13,670-mile) journey from Germany was done by train, car and boat.

Grimalda intended to do the same for the return leg and was set to arrive back in Kiel on September 10.

But Grimalda's return was delayed when he ran into difficulties with former independence fighters in the region and a [volcanic eruption](#) forced part of his trip to be cancelled, according to the researcher.

The institute in Kiel was frustrated by the delay and asked Grimalda to return by October 2, according to another letter seen by AFP.

Grimalda said he suffers from medically diagnosed "climate anxiety" and risked succumbing to a [panic attack](#) if he boarded the flight back to Germany.

The researcher said he would contest his dismissal from the institute when he returns to Germany, citing mental health reasons.

Contacted by AFP, the IfW Kiel said it did not comment on internal personnel questions to "protect the private lives of employees".

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