



Statement on Extinction Rebellion

[Green and Black Cross](#) (GBC) is an organisation which provides legal support and solidarity to those involved in protest activity. We provide information about the law on protests, and training to better equip people with legal knowledge so they feel less intimidated when going on demonstrations or taking direct action.

We also train and coordinate legal observers (LOs) who collect an independent set of evidence, later provided to defendants as they move through the court system. We work closely with other similar groups such as [Activist Court Aid Brigade \(ACAB\)](#) and are part of [The Network for Police Monitoring](#) (Netpol). Together we make the bust cards that are distributed at relevant events in the hope that everyone present gets access to solicitors experienced in protest law.

We do not usually make public statements because of the sensitive nature of our work, and because our role is to support people at risk of police and state violence, not to be involved in discussions around how people are engaging in activism. In this instance however, we have serious concerns about the safety of both legal observers and of those taking part in actions associated with Extinction Rebellion (XR), based on how XR's core working groups have been dealing with legal and security aspects of their activity.

Over the last several months, GBC has worked closely with XR to offer help, advice and training in "know your rights", legal observing and back office support. We have reviewed XR materials and helped with questions from the XR legal team. We are no longer willing to continue that work, for the following reasons:

- XR has provided its own training to legal observers which we believe to be inadequate and inconsistent.
- We are concerned that inadequately trained legal observers could be worse than no legal observers.
- It is important for legal and safety reasons that legal observers remain independent on actions and demonstrations they attend. The way in which XR has used LOs does not properly recognise the need for independence – they have been expected to act as XR stewards (often wearing insignia), relaying information from police to participants, or talking to the media, in contradiction to the established role.
- Statements detailing conditions imposed on demonstrations by the police (section 14) were promoted in press releases and social media. This can put people at risk of prosecution as it creates an evidence trail that people who read these posts were aware of the conditions.
- We believe that the way XR stores personal data is inadequately secure (for example, in google documents and forms). This means that personal data belonging to LOs is likely to be accessed by police.
- We believe that the communication channels XR uses for legal observers are inadequately secure (for example, Whatsapp and Facebook messenger groups, public Facebook events and email lists with no bcc). This also means that communication through these channels is likely to be accessed by police.
- We continue to identify misleading and inaccurate information in arrestee support and prison material published by XR, which means that people do not fully understand the risks that they are being asked to take.
- We have heard consistently poor accounts of XR actions and communication from legal observers.

GBC has raised these concerns on many occasions with XR's core working groups. We have tried to work with XR and to provide support as best we could, answering questions and explaining what we thought should (and should not) be done. In some cases this advice was taken, but often the boundaries we set were pushed back, and many times our advice was simply ignored if it did not align with XR's aims and values.

Since many people taking part in the most recent actions have come in contact with our bust cards, we have fielded calls and provided assistance to many of those arrested as we have done for people involved in XR actions since their inception. We wanted to provide as much support as possible to those taking part. However, until a culture of solidarity, democratic accountability and security develops within the organisation, GBC will be unable to encourage legal observers to support XR actions, and at least for now, is stepping back from providing support to Extinction Rebellion as an organisation.

We hope you will believe us when we say that this is a last resort. GBC has recently decided to take a break from external-facing work in order to rebuild capacity and develop our own internal resources, but we remain committed to supporting those individuals who have been arrested in XR actions to date, either directly or through our work with the [Activist Court Aid Brigade](#).

In the meantime, we ask Extinction Rebellion:

- Not to provide legal observer trainings, unless delivered to a standard that adequately equips people to monitor the actions



Statement on Extinction Rebellion

of the police in an an independent and safe manner.

- To offer full support to legal observers when they are coordinated by XR, such as check ins, appropriate and verified legal guidance and buddying co-ordination.
- To improve in-house training materials and publications to ensure they are both accurate and safe by checking them with experienced solicitors.
- To provide updated, improved, independently checked and consistent training to people who wish to continue as legal observers.
- To protect the privacy of those taking part in actions and to develop a culture of security by using secure communication tools and secure information storage.
- To develop a culture of anti-racism and movement solidarity that is visible across the entire organisation and not superseded by a sense of urgency.
- To ensure that people taking part in actions are aware of the full implications of arrest, prosecution and imprisonment, including for work, for mental health and for stress, and that adequate support is provided to everyone.
- Not to share messages on social media about conditions imposed by the police on assemblies and demonstrations, as these may be used to form 'successful' prosecutions against people taking part.