

EXTINCTION REBELLION MÜNCHEN



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XR MUNICH: STATEMENT ON VARIOUS UNCERTAINTIES

Status February 2020

Hello everyone!

We would like to address various inquiries and uncertainties regarding our movement as some of them have worried us. We are happy to get the chance to react to these and thank you for keeping an open mind.

Who is Extinction Rebellion?

Extinction Rebellion (XR) is an international climate justice movement which, by the use of consequent climate action, seeks to make political and corporate leaders act in such a way that a liveable planet is made possible for all beings. We – students, employed people, pensioned people, etc. – base our work on three demands and civil disobedience.

It is true that at the moment the majority of our activists is represented by white, privileged people. This is a problem because the climate crisis affects us all! We are convinced that a bigger diversity will lead to more creativity, higher swarm intelligence, and a better understanding between different social groups. We are currently working on understanding the obstacles to join and stay engaged within XR Munich that people of colour, disabilities, low income, or limited German skills are facing. We continually strive to become more inclusive as a movement. In that we also need to consider that people of colour are especially at risk of repression from the authorities and learn how to better protect them from that injustice.

HOW DO WE CARE FOR OUR ACTIVISTS' SECURITY? HOW DO WE HANDLE REPRESSION?

We are worried about the view that XR would put activist into danger through lack of information, manipulation before actions, and also lack of support with legal consequences after an action took place.

It is explicitly part of the strategy and [principles](#) of XR to vouch with our names for actions that we are part of and to assume the consequences consciously. By that we want to emphasize how urgent and important effective climate protection is. Which consequences those might be is mostly predictable and activists are informed about them in action trainings and, frequently, additional briefings before action. Activists are encouraged to only participate in actions that comply with their personal risk tolerance. Even though there are legal differences, it's not so dissimilar to Fridays for Future activists who accept disciplinary repercussions as a consequence of their climate activism. In both cases it's important that everyone decides for themselves what risks they can tolerate without pressure from other activists.

The risk scale of XR actions include low-level actions which are legal and registered (level 0) to spectacular actions of civil disobedience, which can lead to serious legal consequences (Level 3). We define levels for each of our actions. More information on [risk levels](#) and [legal consequences](#) can be found online (in German).

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For the latter, you can also find demographic-specific information to protect yourself, if you are part of a group which is more at risk of police repression (e.g. people of colour).

To conclude from our [action consensus](#): „We will keep ourselves informed of the legal consequences of our actions and take responsibility for them.“

Our Legal AG helps us cope with legal consequences and resulting legal fees which are covered to the highest extent possible by our repression savings. We do not and cannot guarantee, however, that we can cover all resulting costs yet and each person taking part in our actions knows this.

However, it is true that XR Munich has informed activist groups who partly haven't had any action trainings about XR actions. This has stirred a discussion within as well. We now want to offer action trainings more often and advertise them within other climate justice organizations. We want to appeal to each and everyone's sense of responsibility and self-determination by stating: If you don't have experience with civil disobedience and have not attended an action training, please reconsider if you are sufficiently equipped to safely participate in our actions.

HOW DOES XR COMMUNICATE WITH THE POLICE?

We think it would be naive to see the police as our accomplices, however, we also don't see them as enemies of the climate justice movement.

It is true that other local groups (German: Ortsgruppe/OGs) of XR have informed the police about actions to a very small extent. This usually involved the peacefulness of participants and does not include personal or organizational details. It's a strategic approach: In order to mobilize masses, we need to de-escalate as much as possible in our actions, and as a result keep the barrier for participation as low as possible.

Everyone needs to be aware that we cannot guarantee that the police will approach us or clear us peacefully though. This is part of what is learned in the action trainings. We also see police officers as fellow human beings and that's why we think it's important to interact peacefully (comp. [Principle 9](#) – nonviolence). However, the police will often try to get information out of us, which can put us and others into danger. This is why we do not give out our personal information (how long and how we're involved and with whom, your job because fees are adapted to your income), information about others (who is involved, who organizes), structures, work proceedings and internal sessions of XR (see [police contact sheet \(German\)](#)).

Further information about successful communication with the police and coping with concrete allegations can be found in the German [Rechtshilfebroschüre](#) and the [police contact leaflet](#). To sum it up: We talk to the police in order to de-escalate and when it is good for the participating activists.

HOW DO WE SHOW OUR SOLIDARITY WITH EACH OTHER? WHAT'S OUR STAND ON OTHER CLIMATE JUSTICE MOVEMENTS?

We have heard about uncertainties whether XR shows solidarity towards other groups. Sometimes the police are trying to make an example of someone when they clear them violently or cause them legal trouble.

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In those times, it is extremely important that we, as a movement, stand united and support each other. We also try to avoid unnecessarily harsh police intervention from happening by taking care of each other during actions, remind each other of our peacefulness and calm each other down in order for police provocation to miss the mark (comp. XR book „Wann wenn nicht wir*“, p.164).

As to our positioning towards **othe** climate justice movements, the [action consensus](#) states: “We will work with and in support of other groups and networks [...]. We respect that movements are diverse and we choose to adopt different nonviolent tactics in different circumstances.”

This certainly includes Fridays for Future with all other for-future groups, Ende Gelände or Hambi activists. Some of our rebels are members of other movements as well and we are shocked to be seen as aloof. Unfortunately, this is also a consequence of our capacities: XR Munich is still growing and therefore not all tasks are being taken care of yet. Our interaction with other activist groups can be improved a lot. We would like any peaceful climate justice group to know that we appreciate their work and declare our solidarity with them though.

WHAT IS OUR STRUCTURE LIKE?

Our [principles](#) are clear:

(7) We actively mitigate for power – breaking down hierarchies of power for more equitable participation

(10) We are based on autonomy and decentralization – we collectively create the structures we need to challenge power.

These principles are engrained in our whole organisation, the so called „Self-Organising System“ (SOS) which strives to decentralise power and to be transparent and adaptable. We have a „Dezentrale“ in Berlin which sometimes coordinates a few things, but each local XR group is free to decide or switch roles as they please. Some activists from Munich are also involved with the national working groups (AGs).

It is true, however, that XR is not a naturally evolved, but „designed“ movement. In 2015, Compassionate Revolution Ltd. was founded in the UK out of which XR was developed in 2018, then primarily known in London. The „rules“ we base our work on are [3 demands](#) and [10 principles](#). According to our principles 7 and 10 the founders aren't leaders and XR has even distanced ourselves from founder Roger Hallam after he made a statement that transgressed our principles. As long as he continues to hold his problematic viewpoint we do not want to be associated with him.

WHY WE ARE CERTAINLY NOT A CULT

The impression that XR is sect-like might be a misunderstanding or rather the result of an amiss perception of the arts performance „Red Rebels“. The Red Rebels (based on Doug Francisco's art) have a de-escalating and soothing effect in bigger actions. More on the project's vision can be found on the website of the [Red Rebel Brigade](#).

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To clearly show how little our movement has in common with a sect, we'd like to use [Wikipedia's](#) definition and factors named on the [German version](#).

*„A **sect** is a subgroup of a religious, political, or philosophical belief system, usually an offshoot of a larger group.“*

Just as Fridays for Future, Ende Gelände, Greenpeace etc. we are a subgroup of a political belief system. Through our actions of civil disobedience we sometimes cause conflicts. If this were enough to be called a sect, the American Civil Rights Movement would also have to be seen as such.

Sects, furthermore, are characterised by „doctrines“ that claim to be the „real truth“. XR, just as other climate justice movement, base their claims on the [predominant science](#), of which it is easy to understand that the climate crisis will profoundly and negatively effect our natural basis of life if we don't act now.

Sects have authoritarian structures with oppression of the members' freedom of opinion and freedom of movement. As explained above, XR does its utmost best to flatten out hierarchies and resist their formation. Every opinion is welcome as long as it complies with our [6th principle](#), so as long as it is free of discrimination. The freedom of movement is actually so broad, that anyone who complies with our action consensus can plan and hold actions in our name without consulting many.

Further factors are economic and/or sexual exploitation and human rights abuses – all of these are out-ruled by our [principles](#) and [action consensus](#) and are condemned by us. We are an open, peaceful movement, within which people are ready to accept, on their own free will, legal consequences. This happens after being given thorough legal information and within full self-determination. Furthermore, our regenerative culture, which can structurally be found in the Regen AG, aims to hinder anyone from exploiting even themselves!

One last distinguishing factor is that sects are built on „cult of personality“, XR has denounced founder Roger Hallam after he abused [principle 6](#) and we do not recognise any leaders in our movement.

HOW DO WE HANDLE DISCRIMINATION?

Our [principles](#) on that are very clear. Principle 6 states:

(6) We welcome everyone – Working actively to create safer and more accessible spaces.

This is meant for everyone. But everyone who wants to join XR must comply with this principle. We welcome anyone but not every behaviour. Racist or sexist behaviour is clearly unwelcome. The English version further specifies:

„The world is currently defined by multiple hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. To create safer spaces we need to work actively to continuously build understandings of how these hierarchies operate, so that we can challenge them and build inclusion through making our spaces more accessible. [...] It is our goal that every individual is welcomed regardless of ethnicity, race, class, gender, gender identity, gender presentation, sexuality, age, income, ability, education, appearance, immigration status, belief or non-belief and activist experience.“

Go here for the [German interpretation](#). We take this very seriously as can be seen in our distancing from Roger Hallam after his anti-semitic claims. Unfortunately we cannot undo his behaviour.

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HOW DO WE AIM FOR DATA SECURITY?

In Germany XR has collected personal data before the Rebellion Wave at the end of October 2019 in order to help with the organisation of the rebellion wave. This included to which movements someone belonged and which action level they would have. We have understood that these proceedings have conflicted with the principle of data minimization, unsettled participants unnecessarily and possibly put them into danger. We would like to truly apologize for that.

We have learned from our mistakes and defined strict data protection policies: If we use a survey tool, an agent for data protection checks whether sensitive information is being asked for. In our upcoming survey for the rebellion wave of May 2020 we will work anonymously and only ask for the bare necessities (e.g. if someone will need a seat in the bus to Berlin or not). We won't collect contact data but will point out which information events or workshops participants should partake, in order to participate in the rebellion wave peacefully and securely.

Information in German: [Article on what happened](#) & [XR Germany Statement](#)

Activists who work with XR are not listed in any documents, which is why we always have difficulties to answer the question how many we are. When XR activists establish contact with fellow activists on climate strikes for example, they will be saved in their personal, often even encrypted, cellphones like friends and family or other contacts. Sensitive information is only being communicated on secure platforms or personally face-to-face.

To conclude.

If you share our vision, but are not convinced by our tactics, that's totally okay. We, too, recognise strategies besides ours. To quote from our action consensus: *"We will work with and in support of other groups and networks [...]. We respect that movements are diverse and we choose to adopt different nonviolent tactics in different circumstances."* If you want to become part of XR, however, and participate in our actions, you are very welcome in XR Munich.

We have a personal request to make: Please consider, that we are all humans with feelings, too. We'd like to ask you to come forward with uncertainties or suggestions for improvement directly to us, so we can react to it in due time. Please talk with our many rebels if you want to find out more about our values, demands or strategy. Working together and exchanging ideas with other groups like Fridays for Future is important to us. Only if we're united can we create a world in which all living beings can grow, flourish and live peacefully on this wonderful planet in the future.

Love, Courage and Solidarity,
XR Munich

Please note: We have tried our best to translate everything but unfortunately we could not find all the documents used in the long German statement in English. If you have any questions, please contact us.