

A reinvigorated climate justice movement saw more than 3-4,000 campaigners march through central London last weekend. The protesters brought a message of increasing urgency for decisive action to the doors of No. 10.

The annual march took place on the back of the Extinction Rebellion day of action on 17 November, and the two incontrovertible reports from the IPCC and the World Meteorological Organisation.

Asad Rehman summed up the general mood with a fiery speech outside the Polish Embassy, deliberately chosen as the meeting point to coincide with the COP24, UN climate talks kicking off in Katowice.

Fiery speech

“You don’t need to be a climate scientist to see there is something very wrong with the planet. All you need to do is listen to people on the frontline in the global south,” said the executive director of the charity War on Want.

“Just a one degree of warming and we see killer floods, droughts - we’ve seen famine, we’ve seen super typhoons and hurricanes, millions of people losing their homes and their livelihoods and while the death toll continues to go up and up we have to ask ourselves when climate scientists tell us we are in Decade Zero.

“Why haven’t we made progress when we’re heading for not 1.5, not 2 degrees, but anything up 5 to 7 degrees warming?

“It’s because we’re in system that says that black and brown and poor people can be sacrificed for profit. Some people at the climate talks used to say to me ‘you’re too radical we have to live within the system we have to work within the system’ and I say to them that’s easy when you’re not dying from that system.”

Social justice

He added: “Keep the fossil fuels in the ground yes, but also let’s bring energy to the one and a half billion people in the world who don’t have energy.

“We have to take on the agro-business that rack up huge profit while people go hungry, it means taking on the corporations that are cutting down the forests. Our big challenge is to connect our fight in this country to our fight globally.

“Just a mile down the road is the City of London where our banks and corporations are driving climate injustice. We need a vision of the world which is fairer and we have that, we have the solution to the climate crisis.

“What we lack is power and to build - we need to build a powerful movement and that means everybody here has to recognise that we have to go home after today’s march and connect our fight with the fight for social justice.”

International pressure

Speaking about the Amazon rainforest and the global south, Beatriz Ratton, from Brazilian Women Against Fascism said: “Bolsonaro’s government wants to open protected areas to economic interests and reduce environment agencies’ relevance.

“This follows all the previous work to reduce deforestation which was reduced by 80 percent between 2005-12. He’s also merged the ministry of farming with the ministry of environment, which will now be clearly in favour of the farming industry.

“The Brazilian government withdrew the offer to host the next UN climate conference, while threats to the Amazon risk the rights to indigenous people.

“Bolosnaro recently said he won’t recognise one more centimetre of indigenous land and will reduce the size and even undo indigenous territories that are officially recognised. If he enacts this threat he’ll destroy entire unique and vibrant peoples who rely totally on their land.

“We need to act now by demanding there is international pressure as well sanctions should the government not adhere to committing to fighting climate change.”

Creative movement

Anna Gretton from Extinction Rebellion said: “Arrests are a very small part of our activity. Most of our efforts are going on behind the scenes - there is role for everyone in our movement.

“We need to see everyone coming together, it really is now or never - the environmental movement has got to be bold creative and imaginative we need to use all the tactics in the tool box and ultimately none of us know if this will work but we can but try.”

Other speakers included Clive Lewis MP, Labour Party; Sian Berry, co-leader, Green Party; Richard Roberts, fracking direct action campaigner whose recent prison sentence was overturned; Paul Allen, Zero Carbon Britain; Nita Sanghera, Vice President, UCU; Neil Keveren, No 3rd Runway Coalition; Barry Gardiner MP, Labour Party; Liz Hutchins, Friends of the Earth; Peter Allen, Frack Free United; Claire James, Campaign against Climate Change.

Source: theecologist