

# The Aarhus Convention

Access to  
information



Public  
Participation



Access to  
justice



The Aarhus Convention is the most ambitious venture in **environmental democracy** undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations.

Kofi Annan, then UN Secretary General

## Article 3(8)

Each Party shall ensure that persons exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of this Convention shall not be penalized, persecuted or harassed in any way for their involvement. This provision shall not affect the powers of national courts to award reasonable costs in judicial proceedings.

# **Decision VII/9 establishing a rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders**

4. Decides that all Parties shall ensure that penalization, persecution, harassment and other forms of retaliation against environmental defenders are promptly brought to an end and that Parties shall take effective measures to eliminate these actions, including through conducting thorough and impartial investigations into all suspected cases to identify and to bring to justice those responsible;

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The repression that environmental activists who use peaceful civil disobedience are currently facing in Europe is a **major threat to democracy and human rights**. The environmental emergency that we are collectively facing, and that scientists have been documenting for decades, cannot be addressed if those raising the alarm and demanding action are criminalized for it. The **only legitimate response** to peaceful environmental activism and civil disobedience at this point is that the authorities, the media, and the public realize how essential it is **for us all to listen** to what environmental defenders have to say.

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Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention