

Protesters take over oil giant's annual meeting in London



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London, May 25 (RHC)-- About 100 climate campaigners on Tuesday demanded the attention of executives and shareholders at Shell's annual general meeting, refusing to be silenced as they spent several hours disrupting the profits-focused gathering to condemn the oil company for its continued

planet-heating fossil fuel extraction.

Dozens of advocates gathered outside the Exhibition Center London (ExCeL) with banners reading, "We mourn the lives Shell has taken" and "Shell Profits Kill," while others entered the meeting and refused to allow the event to begin for more than an hour.

The campaigners sang, "Go to hell, Shell" to the tune of "Hit the road, Jack" and chanted, "Shut down Shell" before about 20 of the activists attempted to occupy the stage. "As Shell continues to cause climate chaos, we will continue to do everything in our power to shut down Shell," said Fossil Free London.

Several people who headed toward the stage were stopped by security officers and carried or dragged out of the venue.

Shell reported its highest profits in its 115-year history last year, raking in 36 billion euros (nearly \$40 billion). Meanwhile, the End Fuel Poverty Coalition in the U.K. told Euronews, more than seven million people in the country are struggling to afford essential energy services as prices have soared amid the war in Ukraine.

"People are struggling under swelling energy bills, yet Shell continues to rake in billions of pounds by profiteering from fuel poverty and war in Ukraine," Joanna Warrington of Fossil Free London told Euronews. "If we want a safe climate and affordable energy, then we have to stop new oil and gas. That's why we're calling on [Shell CEO] Wael Sawan and the bosses of Shell to look beyond their fat paychecks and to shut down Shell. If they don't, an avalanche of protest will do it for them."

The International Energy Agency and climate scientists have been unequivocal in their increasingly dire warnings regarding fossil fuel extraction, with the former admitting in 2021 that policymakers must ensure the world begins an immediate transition away from oil, gas, and coal and toward renewable energy sources in order to avoid planetary heating well above 1.5°C, the threshold targeted by the Paris climate agreement.

One campaigner stood up at the company's annual general meeting on Tuesday and told shareholders and executives a number of deadly disasters that have already been linked to the fossil fuel extraction of firms including Shell, which is committed to continuing its development of drilling sites.

"Wildfires across Europe, famine in Madagascar, harvest failures, crop failures," said the woman as security officers approached to stop her speech. "People are already impacted by the effects of climate breakdown." "With every new well, every new gas field, every minute that you ignore the warnings of science, people die!" said activist and author Ashok Kumar, who also stood up to address the gathering.

The company has begun to face some internal backlash from investors, including the Church of England's retirement fund and the U.K. government pension fund, the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST). Both have said they plan to vote against the re-election of Shell's chair, Sir Andrew Mackenzie, and NEST said it opposes Shell's "energy transition" plan, which includes a pledge to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

"High energy prices produced huge profits at oil and gas companies last year—a golden opportunity to invest very significantly in the transition to a low carbon economy, and one that was comprehensively missed," Olga Hancock, acting head of responsible investment at the Church of England Commissioners, which manages the \$12 billion retirement fund, told Euronews.

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