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Mental Health Experts Seek to Support Norwegian Youth in Climate Change Case before European Court of Human Rights

On Thursday March 10, 2022, alongside and on behalf of 100 psychiatrists, psychologists, academics, and professional organizations specializing in children's mental health from 12 different countries, Our Children's Trust [submitted](#) a request to intervene in the European Court of Human Rights case, *Greenpeace Nordic and Others v. Norway*. The experts seek to provide the court with information about the body of science documenting the mental health crisis children are suffering due to government actions that perpetuate the climate crisis.

In [Greenpeace Nordic and Others v. Norway](#), commonly called the *People v. Arctic Oil* case, two youth-based NGOs and six young plaintiffs contend that the Norwegian government has violated their fundamental rights to life and private family life under the European Convention on Human Rights by issuing oil and gas exploration licenses in the Arctic Ocean. The case was filed after the Norwegian Supreme Court recognized the gravity of the climate harms the youth are experiencing but declined to halt the government's licensing of oil and gas production in the Arctic.

"It is absolutely vital that courts hear directly from the scientific experts when deciding cases that harm children's bodies and their rights," said Andrea Rodgers, an attorney with Our Children's Trust, the law firm that brought the first cases in the world representing children harmed by climate change and presenting evidence of the psychological harm of the climate crisis on children through the expertise of Dr. Lise Van Susteren. "Climate anxiety is toxic for children and the expertise of medical experts is a crucial part of these cases brought by the world's youngest citizens. Governments must be held accountable for taking actions that put their own children in harm's way."

The health experts include Dr. Van Susteren, who convened the first panel on climate disruption and mental health in 2009 and Dr. Eric Chivian, co-founder of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. The experts have asked for permission to provide the Court with their specialized knowledge about "the acute and chronic mental and physical health injuries that children suffer due to climate change and the failure of governments to adequately address climate change." In particular, these experts would inform the Court about the disproportionate injuries climate change inflicts on children and the results of a [groundbreaking survey](#) that illustrates the youth climate anxiety epidemic.

“Our children know what is happening,” said Dr. Van Susteren. “They can read and they can see with their own eyes. Mental health professionals can and do catalogue the list of damages to the psyches of young people, and we can describe the fears about a future that scientists say will be deadly, or at minimum ferociously difficult to live in. But it is up to the leaders, including judges, to show there is reason not to despair - because they are the ones with the power to prove help is on the way.”

The Court will now decide whether to grant the 100 mental health experts request to intervene in *Greenpeace Nordic and Others v. Norway* and will likely release its decision in the next 1-3 months.

Counsel representing the group of mental health experts seeking intervention include Julia Olson, Esq. of Eugene, Oregon and Andrea Rodgers, Esq. of Seattle, Washington.

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[Our Children's Trust](#) is a nonprofit public interest law firm that provides strategic, campaign-based legal services to youth from diverse backgrounds to secure their legal rights to a safe climate. We work to protect the Earth's climate system for present and future generations by representing young people in global legal efforts to secure their binding and enforceable legal rights to a healthy atmosphere and stable climate, based on the best available science. We support our youth clients and amplify their voices before the third branch of government in a highly strategic legal campaign that includes targeted media, education, and public engagement work to support the youths' legal actions. Our legal work – guided by constitutional, public trust, human rights laws and the laws of nature – aims to ensure systemic and science-based climate recovery planning and remedies at federal, state, and global levels.