

# THE IRISH TIMES

## Climate Crisis

# It takes collective climate action to fight climate destruction

Working together on petitions, campaigns and taking a united stance is the way individual effort can have real impact

Jennie Stephens

Thu Sept 17 2026 - 06:00 • 3 MIN READ



Nepal flash floods and landslides: The Nuwakot area after the devastating mudslide of late August.  
Photograph: Niranjana Shrestha/AP

The catastrophic [flash floods](#) in the Himalayas is climate destruction in action. This deadly event was triggered by melting glaciers – a direct result of temperature increases caused by increasing global use of fossil fuels and other emissions.

The images of villages, homes and people being washed away by powerful flows of muddy water are terrifying, but this devastation is not surprising. [Climate justice advocates](#) from [Nepal](#) and other vulnerable regions have

been warning for years about the dangers they face. While this specific disaster was abrupt with no immediate warning, glacier collapse is a predictable part of global heating.

While it might be tempting to tell ourselves that similar devastation would never happen here, Earth's systems have [become so destabilised](#) that catastrophic climate impacts are now possible everywhere. Here in Ireland, more frequent and intense floods, droughts, heat and storms are not just a possibility – they are now a certainty. Yet we are not doing enough to stop climate destruction, nor are we adequately preparing our communities or investing in reducing vulnerabilities.

With large [multinational corporations gaining more power and influence](#) over governments around the world, policy-makers in many countries seem unable to prioritise fossil fuel phaseout or community-based responses to the rapidly growing threats of climate instability. Many government leaders are prioritising investments in national security to reduce perceived military threats instead of investing in reducing climate threats. Ironically, however, devastating climate destruction is far more certain than any potential future military destruction.

During this new era of intensifying climate insecurity, we can no longer afford to accept inadequate governmental responses. What can we do to slow down accelerating climate destruction (climate mitigation) and to prepare for the turbulent times ahead (climate adaptation)?

***Ireland is following a dangerous path, accelerating fossil fuel reliance with data centre expansion, new fossil fuel infrastructure, and militarisation***

Recognising the power of collective action is essential. Although many of today's political and corporate leaders want us to feel disempowered on climate issues, together we can all engage, speak up, and advocate for change. Working collaboratively to co-ordinate action is empowering – it also reduces anxiety about the future.

Advocating for a collective global commitment to phase out fossil fuels remains the top priority. Although the world is already [surpassing the 1.5 degree target](#), every fraction of a degree matters, so policies and initiatives

aligned with [exnovation away from fossil fuels](#) are essential to reduce the future severity of climate destruction.

Policies focused on strengthening communities and reducing vulnerabilities associated with food, energy and housing are also critical. To be prepared for the disruptions ahead, we need to strengthen public services and invest in community-based organisations, community wealth-building, and community-based provisioning of local food and energy. Instead of continuing policies that support privatised, corporate provisioning of basic needs, we must promote co-operative and community-based organisations so that financial returns stay local, to be reinvested in local communities.

Unfortunately, Ireland is following a dangerous path, accelerating fossil fuel reliance with data centre expansion, new fossil fuel infrastructure, and militarisation. Climate policies focus disproportionately on the individual level – but [as Patrick Bresnihan wrote in this newspaper](#), framing climate action as individual responsibility is as ridiculous as suggesting everyone can equip themselves individually to fight in war.

***In addition to engaging directly with political representatives, we can bring climate justice actions into our community organisations, public libraries and other civic spaces***

Instead, we need to mobilise collective, co-ordinated action to reduce climate instability and to prepare for turbulent times ahead. And we need to have courage and be bold.

As [Sally Rooney puts it](#), “If we want the children of today to have a future on this planet, we cannot keep obediently colouring inside the lines.”

In addition to engaging directly with political representatives, we can bring climate justice actions into our community organisations, public libraries and other civic spaces. We can sign petitions – like the [Children’s Rights over Flights](#) petition. We can join the growing movement to [resist data centres](#), become a [conscientious objector](#) to AI, use the resources of [the AI Resist List](#), and support the [Fossil Fuel Treaty](#) initiative. We can join the [Climate Justice Universities Union](#), an international collective transforming educational institutions for climate justice.

As we brace ourselves for projected supercharged climate volatility during the unprecedented [2026-2027 El Nino](#), we can expect more climate-related disruption, destruction and death. It takes a village to raise a child. It takes collective action to fight climate destruction.

*Jennie C Stephens is professor of climate justice at the ICARUS Climate Research Centre, Department of Geography at Maynooth University, and co-convener of the [Climate Justice Universities Union](#).*



Join The Irish Times on [WhatsApp](#) and stay up to date



Sign up for [push alerts](#) to get the best breaking news, analysis and comment delivered directly to your phone



Listen to [In The News](#) podcast daily for a deep dive on the stories that matter

Climate change

Extreme weather

Nepal