

INVESTIGATION

Inside Just Stop Oil's 'toxic' culture: Sex assault claims and infighting

THE **i**PAPER

IMPARTIAL NEWS + INTELLIGENT DEBATE

Join for free now



An email alleged the HR department at Just Stop Oil was aware of serious accusations against two males from multiple women, dating back to 2022. The claims have not been proved

Eleanor Peake, Alexa Phillips

October 27, 2025 4:23 pm (Updated October 30, 2025 6:24 pm)

Activists of [Just Stop Oil](#) have been accused of targeting and abusing “young female staff and volunteers” amid a “toxic culture of shame and silence”.

The climate pressure group, founded in 2022, is known for its tactics demanding the phasing out of fossil fuels – often leading to court action, dozens of arrests and even jail sentences for its supporters.

Some of their most [high-profile activities](#) have included blockading the M25, throwing paint on Van Gogh’s Sunflowers and storming the Silverstone Grand Prix.

On 28 September, an email was sent to the group's more than 100,000 members. It alleged the HR department at [Just Stop Oil \(JSO\)](#) was aware of serious accusations against two males from multiple women, dating back to 2022. The allegations include “grooming, coercion, sexual assault and rape”.

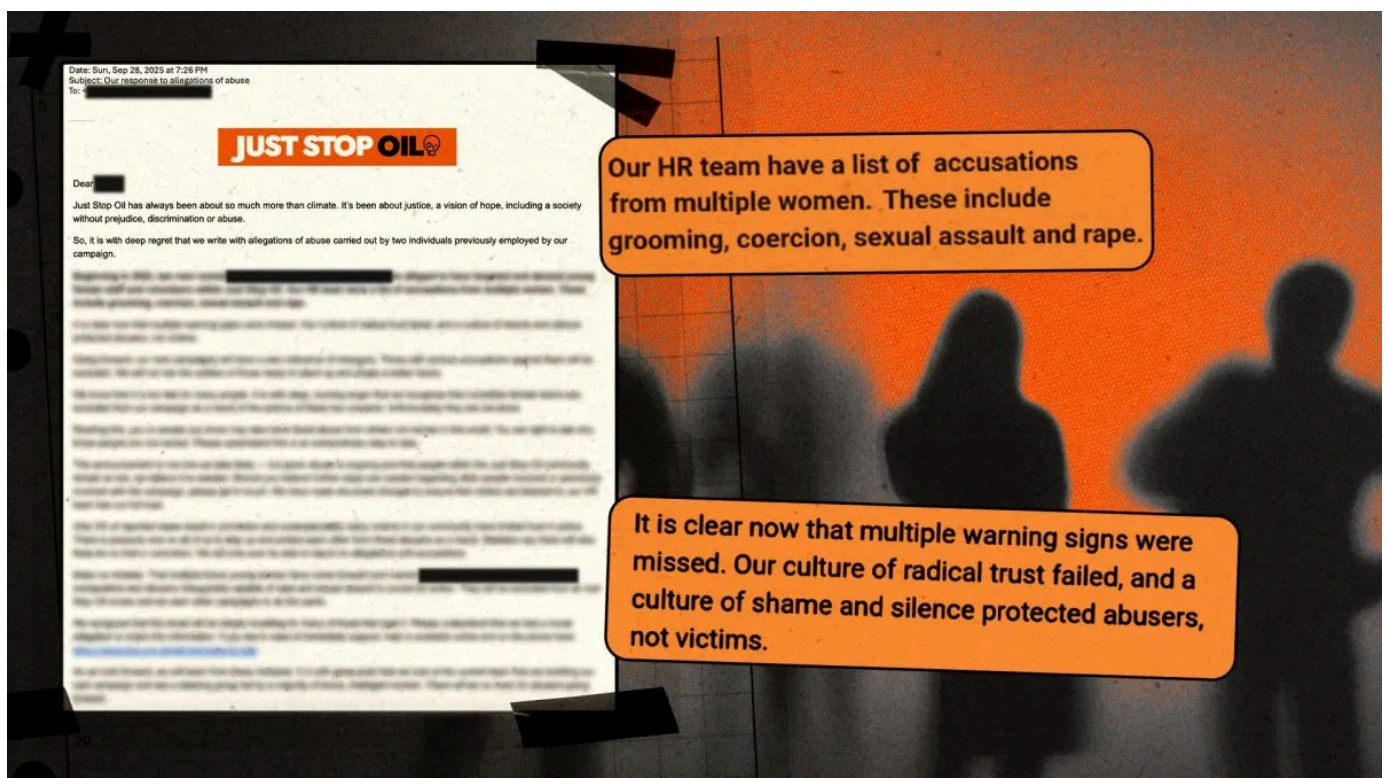
The email, which was sent from the group's central email address, was the work of a whistleblower who claims the moral cause of JSO had been prioritised over sexual assault allegations.

The Met Police could not say if it was currently investigating any allegations of sexual assault or misconduct relating to Just Stop Oil.

None of the claims have been proved. But the claims and counter-claims shine a light on the tensions and infighting within one of the UK's most high-profile pressure groups.

According to two separate sources inside the group, at least three other male JSO members have also faced allegations of historic sexual misconduct, also with nothing proven.

In the email detailing the claims, which were repeated in social media posts (now deleted), JSO's activists was told: “Our well-intentioned culture of radical trust proved inadequate, and in its place, a toxic culture of shame and silence was allowed to develop – one that protected the abusers, not the victims.”



An email was sent to more than 100,000 members of Just Stop Oil alleging the sexual assault of female volunteers and staff

Splits within the organisation were exposed when a day later a further email from the same central address was sent to activists, responding to the allegations.

JSO's leadership said that the previous email was “not an authorised communication by the campaign” and did not “reflect how we generally engage with safeguarding issues, which we believe should be handled in a way that is sensitive to the needs of survivors”.

Accused men seen as martyrs

Speaking anonymously, the whistleblower, who left the group after making the allegations public a few weeks ago, said there was “nowhere” to report these men either internally nor externally, adding: “How could you go to the police when you’d just been arrested yourself?”

They added: “By the time organisers started to understand how bad things were, the story was so painful that it presented an impossible dilemma. Do you blow the whistle and wound the campaign while supporters were serving multi-year prison sentences?”



JSO activists are known for filling fire extinguishers with orange paint and spraying their targets (Photo: Isabel Infantes/AFP)

In a statement, Just Stop Oil said it “has a safeguarding team that deals with any concerns raised on a case-by-case basis”, adding that it does not comment on individual cases which are dealt with in a confidential manner.

Oliver Clegg, a current JSO member, claims that the ambitions of the protest group had been put before any allegations.

He alleged: “So a bizarre sort of moral justification is created in which speaking up about these allegations is bad for the campaign, and bad for the climate.”

He said that “warning a young, vulnerable woman that the man she is doing activism with poses a serious risk to her is seen as the wrong thing to do”.

Megan, a former JSO member who spoke using a pseudonym, said the cause “attracted quite a lot of young vulnerable people which then also attracted the abusers”.

She added: “There’s this idea of restorative justice, so a lot of people distrust the police and are prison abolitionists – I am, too,” she said. “I think there is just a culture of brushing it under the carpet to protect the reputation of the men at the expense of victims.”

She argued that the police were “seen as part of the problem” acting “in the interests of the state”.

Megan claimed that protecting the wellbeing of the alleged abusers was another reason used to “silence and shame victims”.

The i Paper has also obtained a recording of a HR meeting during which JSO staff discuss a member who had admitted that he had committed sexual assault nine years ago but no action was taken against him.

“He was very young, and it happened a long time ago,” a HR worker said in the meeting. “Part of the opportunity of radical campaigns is giving people a place to grow and better themselves.”

How alleged abusers were protected

JSO activists have described a unique bond between activists. “The dynamic leads to people becoming slightly alienated from the wider world that they’re frustrated with, and becoming more attached to the group,” said Clegg.

Megan echoed his view: “A lot of the things we did together were very intense, so it was quite bonding.”

Our sources claim many of the women lodging complaints were in their 20s, while the core leadership campaign includes more people in their 30s and 40s. The membership has been dominated by students and retired people who have free time to attend the protests and fewer concerns about being arrested and spending time in custody.

Alleged victims were reluctant to go to the police because of negative experiences with police officers, according to the whistleblower.

In a post published last year on Shout Out UK, a political literacy website, one former supporter said JSO organisers were focused on increasing arrests, filling up prisons and wasting judiciary time as a way of forcing politicians to cave to their demands for climate change action.



JSO activists sprayed graffiti on the Bank of England in October 2022 (Photo: Richard Baker/In Pictures)

Whistleblower's email a 'sh*t sandwich'

In April, JSO ended its campaign of direct action, claiming it had met its main goal to stop the Government issuing new oil and gas drilling licences. The focus for now is supporting splinter protest groups such as Assemble and Youth Demand.

In a private WhatsApp voice message, shared with *The i Paper*, a male voice believed to be that of JSO's head of media, James Skeet, is heard calling the whistleblower's email a "shit sandwich" that "potentially torpedoes us as an organisation". He also claimed it had destroyed "any chance of justice being done now".

He added: "We've ridden the wave on worse controversies. So we'll see where this goes. But at the moment, we're going to have to be very lucky that this doesn't tank the whole f**king thing."

There is no suggestion that any major backers or donors knew or were aware of any sexual assault allegations against Just Stop Oil members.

Responding to the investigation, JSO's leadership said its safeguarding team "is manned by experienced social workers who will assess the severity of the complaint and decide the correct course of action to take.

"This ranges from restorative justice and mediation for minor issues, through to asking people to leave our spaces, or referral to external support/law enforcement in extreme cases."

The former member who sent the email making the sexual assault allegations public believes that JSO should have acted sooner.

They said: “I believe in Just Stop Oil. I believe in civil resistance. I know what it can do and what it has to do at this critical junction in human history.

“I will remain inspired by the courage and leadership shown by thousands of people who have been involved, but it’s now clear that a small number of manipulative men took advantage of the trust of the community.”

If you have more details on this story please contact the iPaper in confidence at alexa.phillips@theipaper.com

If you are over the age of 16, living in England & Wales, and have been affected by any form of sexual violence or abuse, specialist and confidential support is available 24/7. Call 0808 500 2222 or visit the [24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line](#) to chat online.

YOUR NEXT READ



■ VLADIMIR PUTIN

INTERVIEW I'm a Russian living in London – this is what people back home think of Putin

■ POLITICS

'We face annihilation': Starmer braced for tense showdown with Labour MPs

■ POLITICS

Audis, BMWs and luxury cars face cut from Motability scheme in Budget

■ POLITICS

EXCLUSIVE House of Dynamite warning on flawed nuclear missile defence is accurate – top general