

Headline: Protesters throw cake at Volkswagen execs

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TAKE THAT! Wolfgang Porsche, board member of German car giant Volkswagen, looks on after a piece of cake has been thrown at the front of his desk during the company's annual general meeting on May 10 in Berlin. —AFP

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BERLIN—Activists hurled cake at Volkswagen bosses on Wednesday, as the German carmaker's annual shareholders' meeting was disrupted by protests over human rights and climate change.

Outside the hall where the event was taking place in Berlin, climate protesters gathered to put pressure on Europe's largest car manufacturer to reduce its carbon footprint.

"The science is clear: the emissions from Volkswagen's planned car sales are beyond planetary limits," was the message held up by activists from the group Scientist Rebellion.

Inside, the meeting itself was interrupted when cake was aimed at Wolfgang Porsche, who sits on Volkswagen's supervisory board and celebrated his 80th birthday Wednesday.

A topless woman also interrupted the speech given by Volkswagen chief executive officer Oliver Blume to criticize the group's operations in the Chinese region of Xinjiang.

Activists accuse Volkswagen of turning a blind eye to human rights abuses in the region, where the group has a factory with Chinese partner company SAIC.

China's Communist Party is accused of detaining over 1 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the far-western region as part of a yearslong crackdown, as well as running labor camps.

China vehemently denies the abuse allegations, while Volkswagen has also rejected suggestions forced labor is used in its factories.

"A constructive dialogue is important. And a general meeting offers a good opportunity for this," the company said in response to the protests.

Among shareholders, some lamented Volkswagen's poor stock market performance despite record profit margins and the drop in sales in China, a key market for the group, where it is facing increasingly stiff competition from local car manufacturers.

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