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Headline: Greta Thunberg backs climate group shut down by France

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PARIS, France: Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg on Wednesday gave her backing to a climate group shut down by the French government amid accusations it foments violence.

The government issued a decree earlier on Wednesday outlawing Uprisings of the Earth (SLT), saying it had encouraged violence in a series of demonstrations, including one that saw fierce clashes with police over an irrigation project.

SLT condemned the shutdown and called for protests in dozens of cities across France starting Wednesday.

The group also won the swift backing of Thunberg who was in Paris on the sidelines of a summit on green finance.

"This is about the right to protest and this is about defending life," Thunberg told a news conference with members of the organization and supporters.

"I hope there'll be more people who stand up against these things that are happening now, and stand up for the right to protest," said the 20-year-old who regularly calls on world leaders to act fast against climate change.

Following Wednesday's weekly cabinet meeting, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said that "under the claim of defending the preservation of the environment... (SLT) encourages sabotage and property damage, including with violence".

SLT is part of a new wave of more radical climate activist groups, including Extinction Rebellion, that say direct action is needed in response to insufficient efforts to combat climate change and global warming.

The dissolution procedure for SLT was launched in March after around 5,000 protesters battled with more than 3,000 police officers during a protest against a giant irrigation reservoir near Sainte-Soline in western France.

Two protesters were left in a coma afterwards and about 30 officers were injured.

But Darmanin has drawn fire from left-wing opponents and rights groups for branding the actions of some protesters "eco-terrorism", noting that SLT's dissolution is based on a new law targeting extremist ideologies.

"It should not be used in a context of civil disobedience, where the freedom of expression and assembly takes precedence," Greenpeace France said in a statement.

Greenpeace added that it would support SLT if it contested the dissolution decree before the State Council, which rules on the legality of French laws.

