

Headline: Tens of thousands demand climate action in Swiss capital

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Protesters gather demanding policies to combat climate change in Bern, Switzerland September 30, 2023, in this screen grab obtained from social media video. Setayesh Ansari/Instagram @setayesh.ans via REUTERS

Protesters gather demanding policies to combat climate change in Bern, Switzerland September 30, 2023, in this screen grab obtained from social media video. Setayesh Ansari/Instagram @setayesh.ans via REUTERS

GENEVA — More than 60,000 protesters gathered in the Swiss capital Bern on Saturday demanding tougher policies to combat climate change, organizers said, less than a month ahead of a national election.

Such large protests are rare in Switzerland and show growing public frustration with the pace of policy-making to combat global warming despite ample evidence of its impact.

Switzerland's glaciers have shrunk by 10% in two years, while September was the hottest on record in a country warming at more than twice the global rate.

"Many have been losing hope because the government is approving new roads and delaying the climate law. But today we were powerful," said Georg Klingler from environmental campaigners Greenpeace who took part in the march.

The Green Party, which boosted its presence at the last parliamentary election but does not have a seat in the ruling cabinet, estimated that more than 60,000 people took part. A Bern police spokesperson declined to give an estimate.

"Parliament, with its bourgeois majority, is preventing rapid, consistent and effective climate protection," the Green Party said. "We need a change at the next elections," it said, referring to the Oct. 22 legislative poll.

Switzerland's policies are deemed "insufficient" by research consortium Climate Action Tracker.

Its voters approved a draft climate law in June that aims to cut emissions to net zero by 2050 by giving financial incentives for firms and consumers to switch to renewables. But the government has said the law will not take effect until 2025.

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