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## **Amazon threatens to fire workers speaking out on the company's role in the climate crisis**

Members of Amazon Employees for Climate Justice have been targeted by Amazon Legal and HR despite Company's Climate Pledge

(SEATTLE) - Amazon tech workers have been contacted by Amazon legal and HR representatives and questioned about public comments they had made around Amazon's responsibility in the global climate emergency. Some workers then received follow-up emails threatening termination if they continue to speak out about Amazon's business.

The workers are leaders in Amazon Employees for Climate Justice (AECJ), a group that came together to challenge Amazon to become a bold leader in the fight against climate change. Amazon's targeting of employees came just one month after Amazon announced its Climate Pledge and committed to company-wide carbon emission goals for the first time, a major victory for AECJ. Before the Climate Pledge was announced, workers had been calling on the company to be a leader in tackling the climate crisis for ten months, and organized thousands of Amazon workers all over the world to walk out on September 20 for the youth-led Global Climate Strike.

"This is the time when we need to come together. We need all hands on deck, everyone doing everything they can to meaningfully and urgently address the climate crisis," said Maren Costa, a User Experience Principal Designer at Amazon who was threatened with termination of employment for speaking to the Washington Post. "This is not the time to shoot the messengers. This is not the time to silence those who are speaking out."

Members of AECJ say Amazon updated its policy about workers speaking to the press and on social media in early September, one day after the group announced they were organizing the climate walkout. The updated policy requires employees to seek prior approval to speak about Amazon in any public forum while identified as an employee and has been used as the justification for Amazon's attempts to silence workers. This is in contrast to Amazon's leadership

principles which encourages employees to have a backbone and challenge decisions when they disagree.

“Amazon’s newly updated communications policy is having a chilling effect on workers who have the backbone to speak out and challenge Amazon to do better,” said Victoria Liang, a Software Engineer at Amazon. “This policy is aimed at silencing discussion around publicly available information. It has nothing to do with protecting confidential data, which is covered by a completely different set of policies.”

Over the past year, Amazon workers have publicly challenged Amazon’s lack of transparency and action on climate change. In December 2018, dozens of employees co-filed a shareholder resolution urging the company to report its plans to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. More than 8,700 employees have signed an open letter to Jeff Bezos in support of the resolution.

“Amazon’s policy is not going to stop the momentum tech workers have built over the past year at Amazon,” said Justin Campbell, a Data Engineer at Amazon. “The climate crisis is the greatest challenge we face and the only way we can find solutions is by protecting people’s right to speak freely and disrupting the status quo.”

“I’m inspired by how much employees have accomplished in the past year,” said Rebecca Sheppard, a Senior Product Manager at Amazon. “It’s shocking and disappointing that Amazon is targeting people. Demonstrating leadership should be praised not punished.”

Despite the change to the communications policy, AECJ plans to continue pushing the company to do more to take action on the climate crisis. Since announcing the Climate Pledge, Amazon continues to develop AWS products and services to accelerate oil and gas extraction and has not made a commitment to end funding of climate-denying politicians, lobbyists, and think tanks. AECJ is also pushing Amazon to commit to zero emissions by 2030, not net zero by 2040 as Amazon announced in September 2019, two weeks after thousands of employees pledged to walk out over the company’s lack of climate leadership.

“Throughout history, change has happened only after brave people spoke out, even when at risk to themselves,” said Danilo Quilaton, a Senior Product Designer at Amazon. “Amazon’s new policy is trying to silence people at a time when leadership and courage is needed more than ever.”

“The climate crisis is already affecting all of us,” said Bobby Gordon, Finance Manager at Amazon. “We cannot confront this monumental problem, let alone avert catastrophic damage to our planet and society, if we are not allowed to speak up about it.”