



International Campaign on Climate Refugees' Rights (ICCR)

We call for a new legal framework for climate refugees to realize their social, political, cultural and economic rights.

Many developing countries of the global south are facing serious catastrophe due to climate change. Hundreds and thousands of people from these developing nations have already been displaced and millions more will be displaced if appropriate measures are not taken today. The current rate of climate change is rapidly increasing due to the onslaught of global warming caused by excessive carbon emissions, and more frequent and extreme draught, flooding, cyclones and sea level rise are the life-threatening results. All of these consequences not only pose mortal danger but also lead to the destruction of the means of livelihood which sustain millions of people in the global south.

Recent studies show that around 30 million people from the coastal areas of Bangladesh, 300 thousand from the Maldives, 10 million from Vietnam, 10 million from Mediterranean Egypt, and 600 thousand from Guyana will be displaced due to loss of land as a result of climate change effects. According to the First Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC AR1) in 1990, around 150 million people could be displaced by climate change by 2050. A study conducted by Norman Myers claimed an estimated 25 million people were environmentally displaced in 1996 and this figure is predicted to double by 2010 and reach 150 million by 2050. However, the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change in 2006 and a Christian Aid report in 2007 estimate displacement of 200 million and 250 million people, respectively, due to climate change by 2050. Human migration, however, is only one impact of climate change (IPCC AR1).

According to the African Union, political upheaval, conflict and natural disasters have left the continent with between 12 to 14 million displaced people. However, the consequences will be much more severe than have been estimated as one of every 45 people, globally, will have been dislocated due to climate change by 2050. The profit driven modes of production, extraction and consumption of natural resources by corporate agencies have brought prosperity to the developed nations at the expense of the global environment. The consequent global warming crises has impacted the global south

most harshly, creating a spiral of new tensions for the poor communities of developing countries, where people continue to suffer from poverty and malnutrition without effective access to public services. It must be understood that under the ‘free market’—the neo-liberal economic order—transnational corporate agencies, backed by lenders, pursue profit through the over-exploitation of nature, causing excessive carbon emissions, exacerbating the climate crisis.

There has been little effort by the developed nations to address the issue of climate refugees, which is a dire consequence for climate change. No policy measures or international legal regime have been enforced for the protection of the human rights of climate refugees, despite the fact that hundreds and thousands have already become victims of climate change.

The Geneva Convention of 1951 narrowly defined the term ‘political refugee’ however, complex developments and changes have significantly shifted the global arena and consequent redrafting and defining of international law must follow; climate refugees should not be treated as ‘political refugees’. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IMO) have also reached no resolution for climate refugees. It has yet to be properly considered how climate change victims will be strategically recognized and addressed based on the principles of human rights and justice.

Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) however, adaptation and mitigation measures to some extent talk about the necessities of relocating people from danger-prone areas to safe locations. African leaders recently ratified a convention on the protection of the continent's internally displaced people, refugees and returnees, billed as the first of its kind worldwide. The convention calls on member states to provide special assistance for displaced people with special needs, including the elderly, and calls for the prevention of forced displacement.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 13, states that the United Nations must take proper measures to realize peoples’ rights to the freedom of movement within and between state borders. A separate Safeguard Protocol (SP) should be framed to address climate victims under a rights and justice framework as the climate victims have contributed least to climate change, yet are paying the most, as victims of global injustice caused by unequal and undemocratic global architecture. Climate victims should have the social, political, cultural and economic rights to claim to be settled in a dignified manner as Natural Persons.

We observe that there is still a lack of awareness among communities and civil society organizations and groups, a lack of coordination among departments of the developing and developed countries, and a lack of cooperation by the developed countries to mitigate the effects of the climate change crisis. We believe there should be more actions on the ground as well as at the policy level to resolve the climate crisis. However, the international community should provide assistance to these vulnerable people of climate-

induced displacement under a new framework of reparations, not as part of regular development assistance (ODA).

There is an urgent need to develop appropriate strategies, a new framework of development cooperation to address the causes of climate-displaced communities, and to take measures for their resettlement and rehabilitation with honour and dignity.

ICCR is committed to work on raising more voices in realization of the rights of climate refugees while promoting further activism at the ground and policy levels by doing research, identifying climate refugees, tracking climate change financing, and advocating for reparations for climate refugees, as well as holding regular national and global meetings of ICCR members.

ICCR is also committed to deepening the understanding of its member constituencies and communities along with all stakeholders. Currently, Bangladesh Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, Kenya, Ghana, El Salvador have all become members, and it is open to receive more members who are interested and want to be involved.

Therefore, in asserting the need for rights and justice of climate refugees, a new legal framework is essential. We, the 'International Campaign on Climate Refugee Rights (ICCR)' urge organizations for their support and solidarity, building consensus and deeper understanding and also demanding global leaders to recognize climate refugees and to bring them under a legal framework to ensure their rights are protected and that justice is served.