

COP28, MIGRANT JUSTICE & CLIMATE JUSTICE: HOW DO WE TALK ABOUT CLIMATE, MIGRATION AND BORDERS AT COP28?

The role of climate change in both forced displacement and wider migration is increasingly apparent, with climate impacts on people in marginalised communities becoming more severe and more people being forced to leave their homes, the majority of whom are moving within or between countries in the Global South. At the same time, countries and corporations in the Global North profit from the increased militarisation and proliferation of racist border policies. A militarised response to a heating world, in the form of walls, camps and drones, will only increase suffering and prolong the climate emergency. **Climate action must include justice for all people everywhere.**

With COP28 taking place in the UAE, from 30 November until 12 December 2023, civil society will be talking about climate and migration. This briefing note aims to guide communicators and campaigners on how migrant justice intersects, and how to talk about climate-linked mobility in a way that is justice aligned and does not stoke fears and insecurities.

HOW DOES MIGRANT JUSTICE INTERSECT WITH CLIMATE JUSTICE AT COP28?

DETENTION & DEPORTATION

While the UAE has stated that COP28 visitors would be permitted to “assemble peacefully to have their voices heard”, it has been increasingly dangerous for dissidents to travel to and through the UAE, even for people from outside the UAE. Even transiting through Dubai, dissidents have been subjected to detention and deportation under the laws of the country, which has largely criminalised freedom of expression, association and assembly. The risk of detention and deportation is the daily reality of migrants and refugees facing inhuman immigration systems and militarised borders.

TREATMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS

A recent report from Vital Signs Partnership found that extreme and rising temperatures in the Gulf states, combined with ineffective labour practices and protections, are having devastating consequences for the health of migrant workers from South Asia. During the Dubai Expo in 2021, migrant cleaners and security guards told the Associated Press that they were working 70-hour weeks in the withering heat. Meanwhile, the UAE announced that at COP28, for the first time, there would be a day specifically dedicated to the health impacts of climate change. COP28 hosts should lead the way to protect migrant workers rather than exploit them in the most extreme weather conditions.

WAR & WEAPONS

We cannot afford the financial, environmental and human costs of war. In 2022, global military expenditure increased by 3.7%, reaching a new high of \$2,240 billion, according to SIPRI. Military spending has a long-lasting impact on the climate crisis, not only by dramatically increasing greenhouse (GHG) emissions, but by diverting significant financial resources away from cross-border climate solutions and potentially toward militarised competition for resources in a heating world. Research from the Transnational Institute's report “Climate Collateral” shows that one year's military spending by the top 10 military spenders would pay for promised international climate finance for 15 years (at US\$100 billion a year).

The richest countries are spending 30 times more on their armed forces than they spend on providing climate finance. The rising power of arms and related industry has a huge impact outside the military - it plays a key role in migration control, policing, and surveillance. The environmental costs of war include land, water and air pollution, deforestation, increased levels of CO₂, and destruction of wildlife. If the world's armed forces were ranked together as a single country, they would be the world's 29th biggest oil consumer. Like the climate crisis, the human costs of war leave a lasting legacy for the youngest generation and impact all of us.

TALKING POINTS

As the climate emergency deepens and intersects with other economic and political crises, more people around the world will be forced to leave their homes in search of safety and dignity. Governments falsely view border controls, walls and surveillance as a way to control the impacts of a heating world and spend billions of dollars propping up the border and surveillance industry (BSI) that profits from the abuse of refugees and migrants.

Climate change is one of multiple reasons why a person may be forced to move to seek safety. People displaced by climate impacts are also often displaced by other environmental, economic, political, and social reasons; the political situation and economic conditions in many places of the world are deeply embedded in the environment. Any environmental disruption has immediate economic or political consequences.

Resources spent dividing the world are resources not spent fixing it. Migration is part of the solution; not the problem. There is no just transition without justice for refugees, migrants, Indigenous, and First Nations people. We can and must build a world where everyone has the right to safety and a decent life, and we solve our shared challenges across borders, together.

BORDER MILITARISATION AND VIOLENCE IS...

A CLIMATE ISSUE:

- because a global border wall is perceived by governments and industry as a way to control climate impacts, and is going to play an increasingly important role as economies come under severe strain.
- because barriers to people moving are also barriers to climate action. The development of extra territorial borders is intended to prevent movement, and thereby provides a (false) option to avoid climate action by using barriers (virtual and physical) to insulate richer countries from climate impacts.

A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE:

- because of the direct treatment of migrants and refugees; e.g. family separation, physical and mental abuse, denial of food/shelter/rights, and the broader impact of surveillance and control on all of us.

A RACIAL AND GENDER JUSTICE ISSUE:

- because of how migration systems are structured by the legacy of colonialism and inequality between countries, and disproportionately affect women and people of colour.

A LABOUR RIGHTS ISSUE:

- because immigrants with insecure migration status or whose status is tied to their job can be exploited by employers, pushing down pay and conditions for all.

A CORPORATE POWER AND ABUSE ISSUE:

- because of the cosy relationships between profiteers and states that shape the border system, and the unaccountable behaviour of corporations involved in policing the system.

A GLOBAL JUSTICE ISSUE:

- because the factors that cause displacement, such as wars, persecution, extreme inequality, are often contributed to by the powerful states which then refuse responsibility for the consequences.

A DIGITAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES ISSUE:

- because of the unaccountable and runaway usage of dangerous surveillance, monitoring and data capture technology against migrants, refugees and racialized populations, and ultimately all of us.

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