

The Climate Crisis, Refugees, and Migration

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Abstract

According to a report by Huang (2023), climate change and large numbers of immigrants are becoming increasingly recognized as two serious, worldwide public concerns. Biermann and Boas (2010) announced that the number of people who are compelled to flee their place of residence because of abrupt or gradual changes in the natural environment—also known as climate refugees—is expected to rise as a result of increasing sea levels, climate change, and water shortages. International policy and humanitarian initiatives are facing serious problems because of this phenomenon, which is changing migration trends. This blog focuses on climate refugees and what may be done to help them. In addition, the blog examines how mass migration affects society and politics, emphasizing the challenges facing the receiving nations. The blog also provides a legal perspective of the state of climate refugees. For everyone impacted by forced migration and climate change, the findings discussed herein contribute to increasing awareness and motivating action towards a more equitable and sustainable future.

Keywords: climate refugee, migration, climate change

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From June 2021 to June 2022, as many as 1.1 million non-British residents received visas to the UK (Migration Watch UK, 2022). The UK Home Office provided figures showing that in 2022, there were 350,000 more cases of non-UK family immigration than there were in 2019 (Green, 2022). However, the current Conservative Party government has failed to keep its promise to voters to reduce immigration. From non-EU nations, 5.1 million migrants entered the EU in 2022 (The Sofia

Globe, 2024). Due to the huge number of immigrants, this has brought great pressure to society, the economy, public facilities, etc.

Migration is exacerbated by extreme weather events and natural disasters caused by climate change. Large-scale immigration has also caused negative impacts on the economy, humanities, and the natural environment. Simon (1999) found that negative externalities related to capital, education, and congestion may result from immigration. Notably, the production level of the nation receiving immigrants may be lowered by immigrants from underdeveloped nations with inadequate work abilities. According to Almulhim *et al.* (2024), we can determine that if human beings do not take appropriate actions to reverse the serious consequences of climate change, as many as 143 million climate migrants will migrate from sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America by 2050 (Podesta, 2019; World Bank Group, 2018). Since 2008, an average of 21.5 million people have lost their homes each year due to the effects of extreme weather and natural disasters. It is predicted that by 2050, 1.2 billion people will have had to leave their country due to climate change, rising sea levels, drought, and high temperatures (McAllister, 2023).

Climate change is not the only cause of mass migration, but it is the main factor driving it. When the temperature rises, the melting of glaciers caused by global warming can lead to the continuous rising of sea levels. Small island countries are at risk of disappearing, and the residents of small island states will face threats to their survival. Global warming and climate change are putting nine islands, like Kiribati, the Maldives, Vanuatu, etc., in jeopardy of disappearing (Acciona, 2024). Tens of millions of people living in coastal cities in the United States, China, India, and Bangladesh are predicted to be at risk of losing their homes and being displaced by 2100 (Davis, 2022). Sea levels in New Zealand have doubled at an accelerated rate over the past 60 years, with experts citing global warming and climate change as the main drivers (Corlett, 2022). The New Zealand government has committed to enacting legislation governing retreats by the end of 2023. In 2021, it unveiled its first national plan to prepare for climate-induced disasters, including rising sea levels.

Residents are overwhelmed by the persistent heat sweeping across the Middle East and North Africa region as rainfall dwindles (Plano, 2022). The scarcity of freshwater resources has caused a water crisis and urbanisation, aggravating local social conflicts. The shortage of water resources further makes it impossible for irrigated agriculture to continue to grow crops, and the livestock industry cannot be maintained, resulting in food shortages. Because of drought, climate migration is

projected to increase by at least 200% by the end of the twenty-first century. Armed conflicts are frequent in Syria because of scarce water resources, drought, and high temperatures caused by climate change. From 1900 to 2011, Syria experienced several periods of drought (Gleick, 2014).

Climate migrants are currently not legally protected due to gaps in international refugee legislation. The only people who are eligible to petition for refugee status and benefit from the right to a safe haven are those who have fled their country because of persecution, war, or violence (W. H., 2018).

Solutions – What can be done?

Environmental migration is not covered by the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the core legal document of the international refugee protection system, which seeks to protect those fleeing persecution, war, or violence (Wouters, 2009). Environmental migrants are in a difficult situation. Due to political factors, they cannot be defined as refugees. As they are outside the jurisdiction of the refugee protection law, their human rights are not protected (Brown, 2008).

While there is no legally binding international regime to protect climate migrants, countries can use voluntary compacts to support them. Dedicating more resources to slowing climate migration is also part of an effective solution. In addition, promoting the cooperation of the international community, providing safer means of transportation for climate migrants, and consolidating and expanding the integrated resources of destination countries are also effective methods.

The international community can reach a consensus on mitigating climate change and controlling greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time adhering to humanitarianism and protecting the human rights of those who have become immigrants due to climate change as much as possible.

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