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Climate Refugees: Facts, Findings, and Strategies for 'Loss and Damage'

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Climate Refugees

Facts, Findings, and Strategies for “Loss and Damage”



The Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley, formerly the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, is a vibrant hub of researchers, community leaders, policy-makers, artists, and communicators that advances research, policy, and work related to marginalized communities. It engages in innovative narrative, communications, and cultural strategies that attempt to reframe the public discourse around marginality and inclusion and respond to issues that require immediate and long-term action.

This brief was produced by researchers in the Othering & Belonging Institute's Global Justice Program, which focuses on cross-sectoral themes that connect the local to the global and vice versa by examining structural marginality and promoting global inclusivity while taking into account local complexities and knowledge productions. To achieve our goals, we ground our work in the fundamental inquiry of how to successfully build inclusive, democratic, and citizenry-based societies.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Climate crisis vs. climate change

This brief favors the term “climate crisis” over “climate change” to emphasize the urgent and extreme nature and impacts of the dramatic increase of the Earth’s temperature as a result of human activity. Climate change is still used in some parts of the report depending on context.

Climate refugee

This brief defines climate refugees as individuals who are forcibly displaced (i.e., involuntary or coerced movement away from their homes) beyond their nation-state boundaries by short- and long-term natural disasters and environmental degradation precipitated or exacerbated by the climate crisis, and by the direct and indirect impacts of such events on their livelihoods, regardless of sector, industry, or location.

Climate refugee vs. environmental refugee

While the terms “climate refugee” and “environmental refugee” have been used interchangeably, this brief utilizes the term “climate refugee” to draw attention to the social, economic, and political forces that contribute to and exacerbate global warming, and that govern the movement and resettlement of displaced persons.

Climate refugee vs. climate migrant

Migrants and refugees are distinct groups governed by separate legal frameworks. Only refugees are entitled to international protection under international refugee law. This brief uses the term “climate refugee” to describe all climate-induced migration (internal and cross-border), and to advocate for international protections under a comprehensive and legally-binding framework.

Climate justice

Climate justice is a call to action for the just division, sharing, and distribution of the burdens and costs of the climate crisis, and responsibilities of addressing it—including long-term mitigation and adaptation strategies, refugee protections and resettlement, monetary compensation, and the transition from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy.

Climate reparations

One pillar of climate justice (and international climate conferences since the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro) is the call for climate reparations, which refers to substantial compensation mechanisms (including but not limited to monetary compensation) to former colonized and marginalized developing countries (i.e., countries of the Global South), which are most vulnerable to climate crisis impacts.

Climate-vulnerable countries

This brief regards Global South countries as most vulnerable to climate crisis impacts due to several factors, including dependence on food, energy, and goods imports; agriculture-, forestry-, and fishing-dominated economies; high external debt burden; lack of fiscal space for sustainable development investments; poor sovereign credit rating; and lack of access to international capital markets. As a result, such countries experience relatively large climate “loss and damage” while lacking adequate disaster response and resilience-building capacities.

Just transition(s)

An umbrella framework that encompasses multiple principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from extractive economies to regenerative ones. A common thread across such efforts is the call for strategies that democratize, decentralize, and diversify economic activity and (re)distribute resources and power.

Petro-persecution

Within international refugee law, cross-border migrants are only afforded legal protections if there is a clear agent of persecution that is internal to one’s country of origin. A term coined in our 2019 report on climate refugees, “petro-persecution” describes how forced migration follows from global dependence on fossil fuels (across nearly all economic sectors), and aids demands for justice from the state and corporate actors that maintain this dependence.

From Climate-Induced Displacement to Climate Reparations and Resilience

DESPITE THE GROWING CONSENSUS among climate scientists and international governing bodies that forced migration is an effect of climate change, and although the expression “climate refugees” is often used to describe climate-induced migration across international borders, the term is not part of international law. Specifically, the premier comprehensive and legally-binding tool for displaced persons, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, does not explicitly recognize climatic and other environmental factors as criteria to define who is a refugee. Rather, international migration following short- and long-term natural disasters is only covered if the provision of support by the local government (or governments) amidst or in the wake of climate-induced disaster is denied on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.¹ As a result of this lack of consensus on how climate refugees can be afforded recognition and protection in the face of catastrophe, across international humanitarian law, human rights law, refugee law, and other bodies of law, protections for climate-induced displaced persons forced to cross international borders are limited, piecemeal, and not legally binding.

The scarcity of protections for climate-induced displaced persons are especially concerning in light of the disparate impacts of the climate crisis between the advanced industrialized countries of the so-called Global North, and the former colonized and marginalized developing countries of the so-called Global South. For example, sea level rise—a long-term driver of climate-induced migration—will

hit the Global South especially hard.² As of 2007, approximately 38 percent of the world’s population lives in coastal areas, with over three-quarters (1.9 billion) living in the Global South and with only 15 such countries containing over 90 percent of the world’s low-elevation coastal zone³ rural poor.⁴ Short-term climate-driven disasters, like storms and fires, already disproportionately impact Global South communities. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over 70 percent of the world’s refugees and internally displaced people come from the most climate-vulnerable countries.⁵ And according to the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), around 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050 due to the climate crisis, largely within and from across the Global South.⁶

As these disparate impacts make clear, the climate crisis is an existential crisis of our extractive global political economy. A crisis born of centuries of fossil fuel-driven uneven development, dispossession, and exploitation, Global North countries and financial institutions have forced the climate crisis upon the world and left its impacts falling hardest on the Global South and on marginalized communities within the Global North itself. It is in this context that *climate justice* has become a call to action for the just distribution of responsibilities and resources to address the climate crisis—from refugee resettlement to just transitions towards regenerative climate-resilient economies. And it is in this context that *climate reparations* have become a call for substantial *compensation* to former colonized and marginalized developing countries as a necessary component

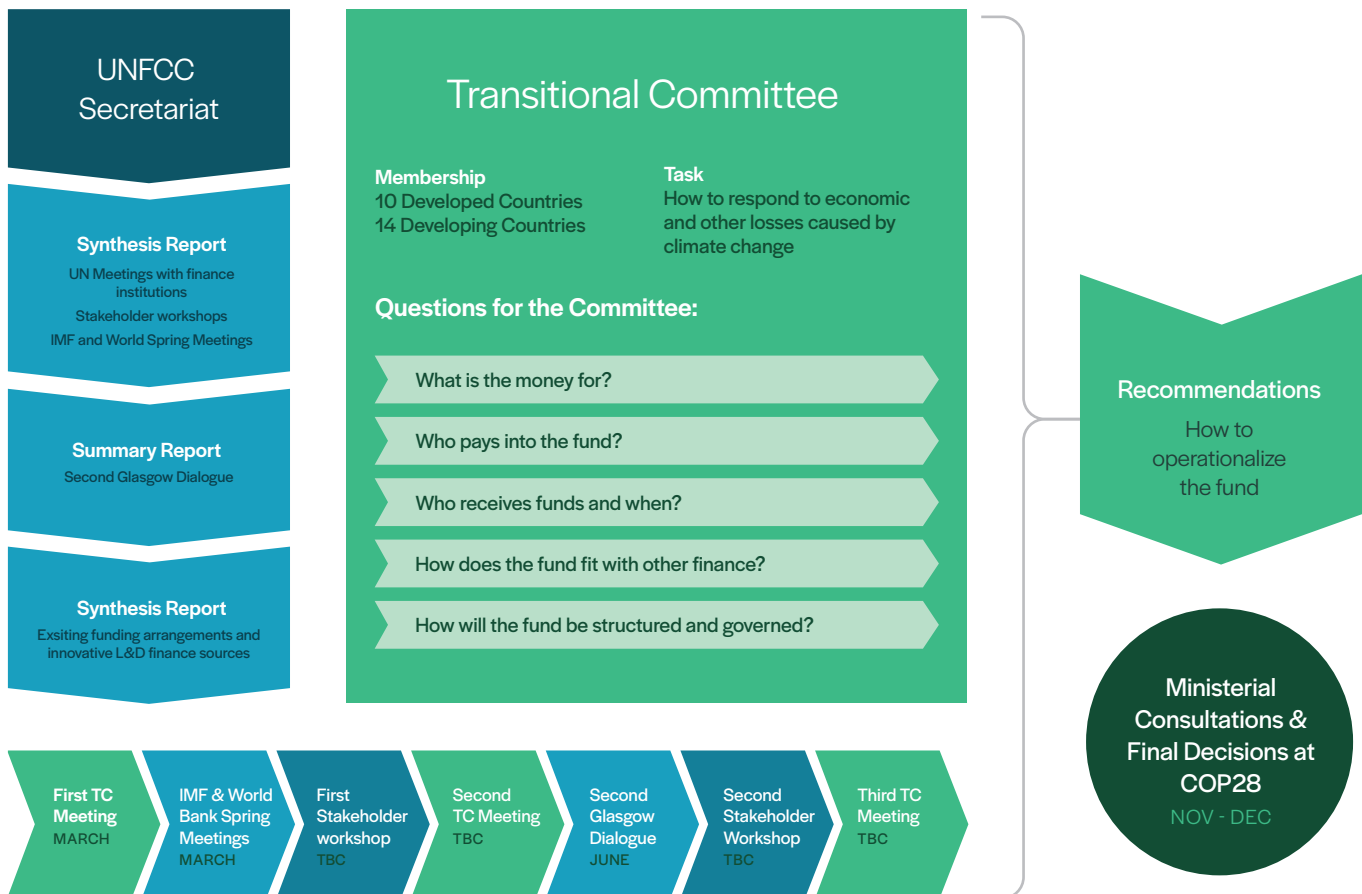
of such work. Needed still is deep consideration of the specific tools and tactics that could help bridge efforts to ensure legal protection and safe resettlement for peoples displaced by the climate crisis with efforts to exact climate reparations from the Global North and global financial institutions.

Bridging Climate Justice Efforts Through “Loss and Damage”

The topic of “loss and damage” has been a part of international climate talks since as early as 1991, when the Alliance of Small Island States demanded that the “financial burden of loss and damage” suffered by at-risk developing countries “be distributed in an equitable manner amongst the industrialized

developed countries.”⁷ The culmination of decades of pressure from such climate-vulnerable countries, the establishment of a “loss and damage” fund at the 27th United Nations Climate Conference (COP27) was a collective acknowledgement of this uneven financial burden and a clear pathway toward climate reparations in the years ahead. Integral to our collective ability to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis and address previous and ongoing harms, the fund aims to provide financial assistance to at-risk developing countries of the Global South and address severe shortcomings in assistance thus far—assistance that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates is five to ten times below the \$340 billion per year needed by 2030,⁸ and that still pales in comparison to the \$13.3 trillion Oxfam International estimates G7 countries owe

Process for Designing the Loss and Damage Fund



Source: The Renewable Energy Institute

Global South countries in unpaid development aid and climate funding.⁹

Although a clear win in the push for climate reparations, success depends on not just how quickly the fund gets off the ground. Success will also depend on which state and non-state actors across the Global North are to be held accountable for intensified climate impacts across the globe and how unconditional funding (rather than loans) and accompanying technology transfers and technical support will be secured from Global North countries. As part of the Transitional Committee, representatives from 24 countries have been working together to decide such matters in anticipation of COP28 in November 2023. Global climate justice movements and civil society organizations have recognized that the Committee's work across 2023, and the "loss and damage" fund as a whole, is key to ensuring that the wide range of climate impacts (including climate-induced displacement and climate refugee resettlement) are recognized as "loss and damage"; that the fund should meaningfully benefit all developing countries; and that the very infrastructure of international economic governance needs to be transformed to foster just transitions across the Global North and Global South alike.

In this light, the questions this brief aims to answer are: How might civil society, policymakers, and other stakeholders across the globe advocate for guaranteed protections for climate-induced displaced persons within international refugee law in ways that support and are supported by the fights for climate reparations and just transitions? And how might the newly established "loss and damage" fund be a vehicle for such joint efforts?

To answer these questions, this brief grapples with a common doctrinal objection to calls for reparations in general: the difficulty of identifying perpetrator and victim groups. Although legal scholar Mari Matsuda argues, "Victims and perpetrators belong to groups that, as a matter of history, are logically treated in the collective sense of reparations rather than the individual sense of the typical legal claim,"¹⁰ two important issues arise in the context of the climate

The Frontlines of Historically Just Climate Finance

In support of both the Sharm el-Sheikh Plan of Implementation calling for a reform of the international financial architecture and the Bridgetown Agenda aiming at a new approach to provide finance to developing countries in a climate crisis, French President Emmanuel Macron and Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley moved forward with the June 2023 Summit for a New Global Financing Pact in Paris. Co-chaired by France and Barbados, four working groups were set up to prepare the summit and discuss new sources for climate finance and more specifically "loss and damage."⁸⁴

In conjunction with the Transitional Committee meetings for the "loss and damage" fund, this meeting on global climate finance was a key opportunity to move forward with climate finance that tackles uneven and far-reaching costs of the climate crisis (including climate-induced displacement and climate refugee resettlement), and to meaningfully benefit all developing countries, and transform the very infrastructure of international economic governance. Collectively, these convenings must take seriously the transition to regenerative and climate-resilient economies as a key function of just climate finance.

Such a historical and justice-informed approach to climate finance would open the door for real alternatives to the international privileging of financial interests—by institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and increasingly the United Nations—that are in pursuit of high-yielding returns to be made from climate disaster, debt burden, and dispossession.⁸⁵ As Barbados Prime Minister Mottley has stated elsewhere: "The global climate crisis requires solutions that are not only practical but historically just."

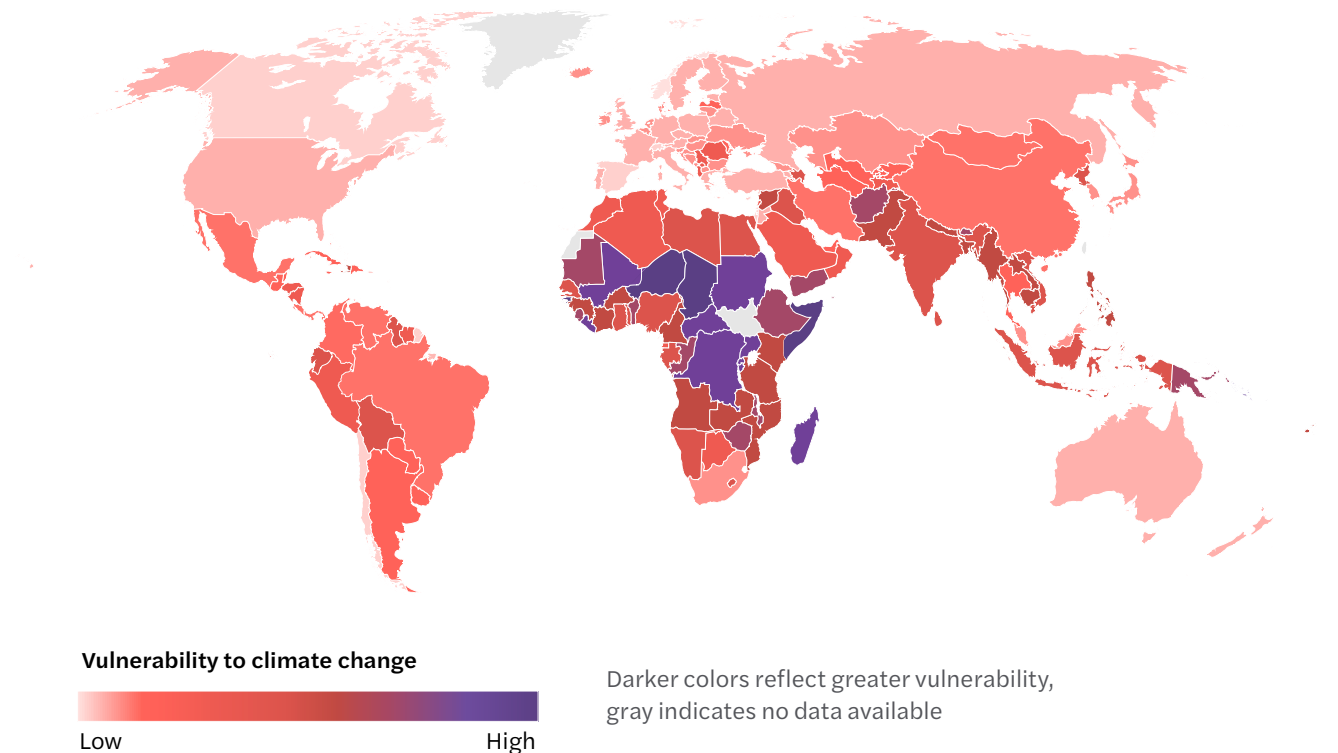
crisis, including the crisis of climate-induced displacement. Firstly, the link between the class of climate crisis perpetrators (i.e., specific countries, institutions, and industries) and the specific impacts of such actions (e.g., drought, flooding, and desertification) are fundamentally indeterminable. And secondly, within international refugee law, and human rights and humanitarian law, the class of perpetrators (or agents of “persecution”) must be internal to the nation within which the harm has occurred.

Not a doctrinal objection, but a political one, a third issue arises when we consider the fact that mechanisms targeting specific industries under the “polluter-pays principle” are not effectively linked to

national and international law, international finance, and international economic governance. There have been several proposed mechanisms for ensuring that Global North countries, institutions, and industries behind the climate crisis pay for it (e.g., global taxation and levy instruments, and debt cancellation). And some of these mechanisms have been imagined as potential exercises in the broader democratization of the market-, state-, and world-shaping power of publicly-backed finance itself.¹¹ Yet, Global North countries, institutions, and industries have by and large resisted such forms of climate action—unsurprisingly, given the estimated 209 billion per year that state-backed private and state-owned fossil companies owe in compensation for the climate crisis.¹²

The countries most vulnerable to climate change

The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative measures overall vulnerability to climate change by considering exposure, sensitivity, and ability to adapt across six life-supporting sectors – food, water, health, ecosystem service, human habitat, and infrastructure



Source: Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative

In short, the criteria for refugee protections are place-based (i.e., national) in ways that preclude a global and international response to the climate crisis; and global and international mechanisms for exacting reparations from Global North countries, institutions, and industries find steep resistance when it comes to being embedded within international law and reshaping international finance and economic governance.

Research Brief Overview

PART 1 of this brief recounts dynamics of cross-border climate-induced displacement and elaborates on how a necessary condition of legal refugee status—“persecution”—is a key barrier to formalizing legal protections for such climate-induced displaced persons. In doing so, it highlights the need for a global, international, and transnational accounting of the perpetrators of the climate crisis, and of climate-induced displacement as a key dimension of “loss and damage” and the demand for climate reparations.

PART 2 targets the doctrinal objections that stand in the way of climate refugee protections and climate reparations. It proposes a global, international, and transnational interpretation of persecution: “Petro-Persecution.” This term crystallizes the trends of *neoliberalization* and *securitization* that characterize how Global North countries, institutions, and industries have exacerbated the climate crisis and the Global South’s vulnerability to it, and how the Global North has managed subsequent crises—including the crises of climate-induced displacement—in ways that multiply “loss and damage.”

Finally, **PART 3** offers recommendations on how to operationalize the framework of “petro-persecution” across national and international law, international finance, and international economic governance. In addition to recommending legal protections for climate refugees, it offers recommendations on how to fortify and expand the legal case for “loss and damage,” and how to link climate-induced displacement and “loss and damage” compensation mechanisms

through research and through labor and land reform. Finally, this brief offers recommendations on the just financing of “loss and damage” in ways that build on the “polluter-pays principle.”

Collectively, this research brief holds Global North countries, institutions, and industries as culpable for the climate crisis and asserts that action on their part is essential to mitigating the crisis of climate-induced displacement by ensuring the safe resettlement of climate refugees, and fostering diversified climate-resilient economies and just transitions across the Global South and Global North alike.

Findings: Climate-Induced Displacement and the Problem of “Persecution”

IN 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its First Assessment Report on the origins and anticipated social and environmental impacts of climate change.¹³ In it, the IPCC warned that “the greatest single impact of climate change could be on human migration” caused by environmental catastrophes, such as severe droughts and shoreline erosion.¹⁴ Soon after, in 1992, the International Organization for Migration and the Refugee Policy Group published a report titled “Migration and Environment,” warning that the number of global migrants “could rise substantially as larger areas of the earth become uninhabitable as a result of climate change.”¹⁵ The case for securing protections for climate-induced displaced persons is clear. Toward such ends, this brief seeks to clarify both the challenges and opportunities ahead, especially as they relate to the broader push for climate justice.

Cross-Border Climate-Induced Displacement

The 1951 Refugee Convention—the principal international framework for refugee protection—has not been amended to include climate-induced migration.¹⁶ Even people who agree that climate-induced displaced persons are in dire need of protections argue against a framework that grants them refugee status for sundry reasons, including: climate-induced displacement primarily occurs internal to one’s nation; isolating climatic causes of displacement is difficult, especially alongside social, political, and economic drivers of displacement; and

other humanitarian avenues may be available for climate-induced displaced persons.¹⁷

Yet, there is another key barrier to formalizing protections for climate-induced displaced persons that is internal to international refugee law—namely, the necessary conditions for refugeehood within the 1951 Refugee Convention. The definition of “refugees” found in Article 1A(2) of the Refugee Convention contains three key elements concerning those it applies to: 1) a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion”; 2) presence “outside the country of [one’s] nationality”; and 3) inability or unwillingness to “avail [oneself] of the protection of that country.”¹⁸

People displaced across borders by the short-term and long-term impacts of the climate crisis fulfill the second element of having crossed an international border. However, they do not fulfill the principal element of being *persecuted*, as stated in the Refugee Convention itself. As legal scholars and migration experts argue, the current definition of “persecution” presents three key challenges when it comes to the matter of climate-induced displacement:

1. Qualifying main polluters or even the international community as a persecutor would create substantial difficulties because one would have to establish the causality between their action/inaction and the respective climate crisis impact in each individual case—something that is virtually impossible at the present stage of scientific knowledge.

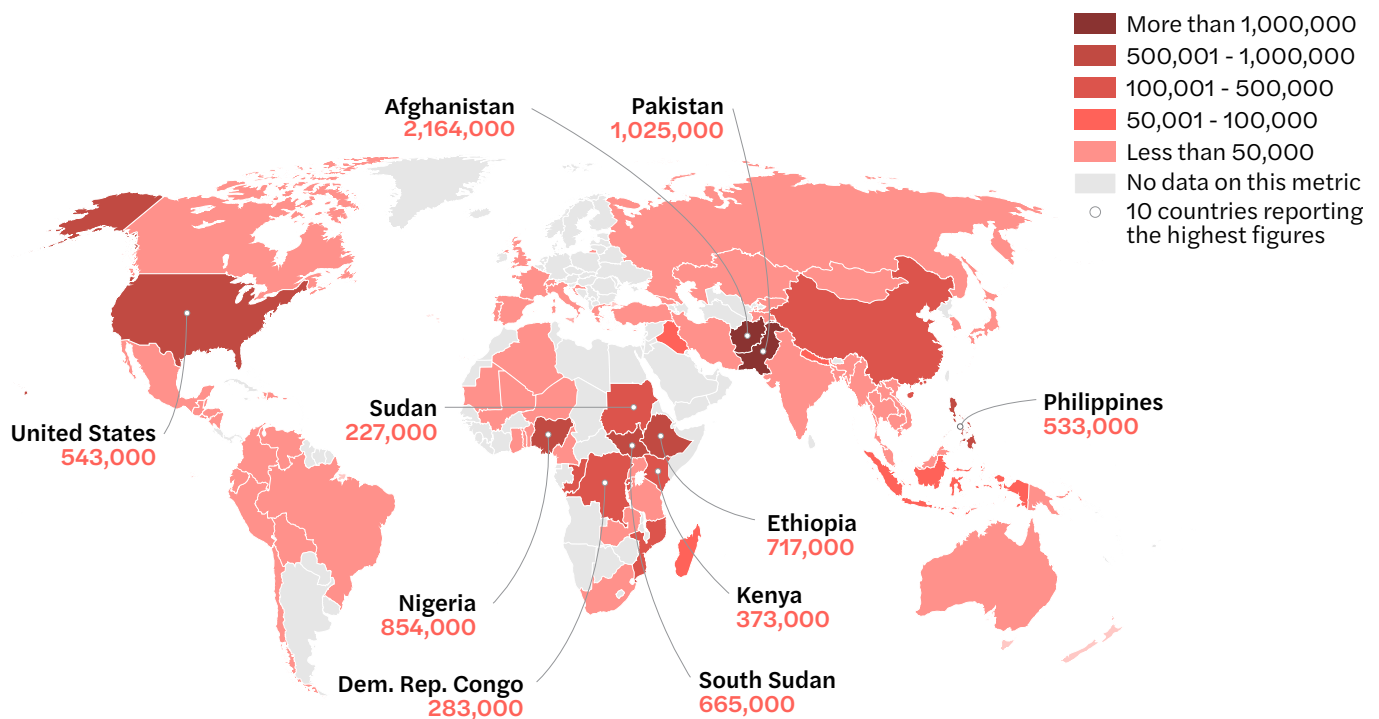
2. A person fleeing the effects of the climate crisis is seeking refuge from a phenomenon born of the actions of public and private entities operating globally, internationally, and transnationally. Thus, qualifying the main contributors to the climate crisis would also “reverse the refugee paradigm” by delinking the agent of persecution from the nation from which flight occurs.¹⁹
3. A person fleeing the effects of the climate crisis might be fleeing a nation and government that has not turned against its citizens but rather wants to protect them yet lacks the resources or ability to provide such protection. Some of the people experiencing the most disastrous effects of the climate crisis are living in countries that

have long recognized the issue and have appealed to the international community for support.²⁰

Internal Climate-Induced Displacement

Though climate-induced refugeehood is in the spotlight, most climate-induced displacement takes place *within* affected countries. By the end of 2022, there were 32.6 million internally displaced people (IDPs) as a result of weather-related disasters—comprising nearly 53 percent of all internal displacements (including those due to conflict and violence). Highlighting the intensifying severity of the crisis, this number is 41 percent higher than the annual

Total number of IDPs by Disaster as of December 31, 2021



8.7 million

Internally displaced people as a result of disasters in **88 countries and territories** as of 31 December 2022

97% of disaster displacements were triggered by weather-related hazards such as floods, storms and droughts

Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)

average of disaster displacements of the past 10 years.²¹ Protections for internally displaced peoples exist, yet key gaps remain. For example, climate-induced displaced persons who relocate internally fall under general human rights protections and the UN's "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement" document, which defines IDPs as:

"Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border."²²

Despite addressing "natural or human made disasters," a major shortcoming of the Guiding Principles document is that it is not legally-binding and instead leaves it to national governments to guarantee protections. Some countries and regional bodies have taken such initiative. For example, in 2009, African leaders within the African Union adopted the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons of Africa, known as the Kampala Convention—the first legally-binding international instrument on internal displacement, and still a rare kind of agreement.

Considering these challenges and models of success, what is required is a legal and political understanding of "persecution" that would continue accounting for the (in)ability of one to survive and avail themselves of a sufficient degree of protection within their country of origin while recognizing that the agents of persecution operate globally, internationally, and transnationally. Such an understanding of "persecution" would account for the reality of the climate crisis and climate-induced displacement and serve as the basis for a normative framing of "climate refugee" protections. Such an understanding of "persecution" would also help situate climate-induced displacement as a key dimension of "loss and damage" and the demand for climate reparations.²³

Strategy Recommendations: A Problem of “Petro-Persecution”

TO HELP BRIDGE EFFORTS to ensure legal protection and safe resettlement for peoples displaced by the climate crisis with efforts to exact climate reparations from the Global North and global financial institutions and build climate resilience for the Global South, this research brief proposes a global, international, and transnational accounting of persecution vis-à-vis the climate crisis, termed “petro-persecution.”

Two dynamics drive “petro-persecution”: *Neoliberalization*, which characterizes how specific Global North countries, institutions, and industries have transformed state and political power in ways that have reinforced global fossil fuel dependence and rendered the Global South and marginalized Global North communities especially vulnerable to subsequent climate crisis impacts. *Securitization*, which characterizes how the Global North has sought to manage and exploit the movement of people as a result of the climate crisis and the processes that have given rise to it, including neoliberalization.

Neoliberalization as “Petro-Persecution”

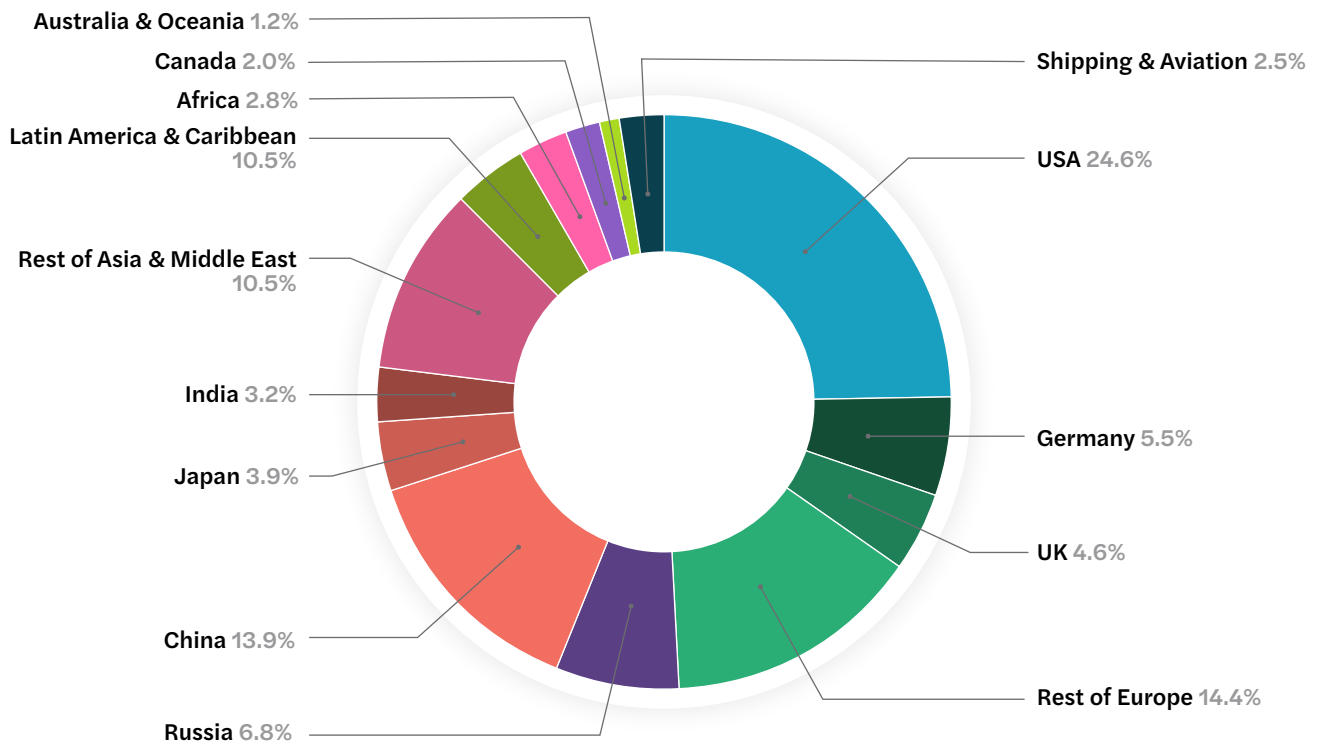
Broadly defined, *neoliberalization* describes the mid- to late-twentieth century reinterpretation and exercise of state and political power modeled on market-based economy values, and the expulsions, displacements, and exclusions borne and aggravated by this dynamic.²⁴

A global phenomenon driven by the Global North, neoliberalization has impacted the Global North and the Global South in different but overlapping ways: In the Global North, neoliberalism appears as cuts to, and the privatization of, state-furnished public services, including public utilities, education, healthcare, and social welfare (i.e., “austerity”). Such public goods are vast storehouses of capital, resources, services, and infrastructure and, thus, targets for extraction and exploitation.²⁵ In the Global South, fueling similar intra-state austerity regimes, neoliberalism has involved the Global North’s imposition of debt repayment priorities and forceful opening of markets to powerful foreign firms via International Monetary Fund and World Bank restructuring programs since the late 1970s, and World Trade Organization predatory price-setting since the 1990s.²⁶ Sociologist of globalization, Saskia Sassen, argues that such constraints and demands “discipline[ed] governments not yet fully integrated into the regime of free trade and open borders, and led to sharp shrinkage in government funds for education, health, and infrastructure.”²⁷

In conjunction with and as part of such disciplining procedures, Global North countries have reinforced global fossil fuel dependence and Global North dominance, but not without resistance from Global South countries and international bodies: Such confrontations have taken place around the US dollar as the reserve currency for key international commodities, especially oil. Saddam Hussein’s regime, for example, had increasingly traded Iraq’s oil in the euro, enhancing its value as an international

Cumulative carbon dioxide emissions, 1750 to 2020

Estimated shares of carbon dioxide emissions from energy and industry since 1750



Source: Our World in Data, Global Carbon Project

currency competing with the US dollar. Likewise, Muammar Qaddafi had proposed the possibility of a common currency in the African Union.²⁸ Although the 1990 US-led invasion of Iraq was premised on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the 2003 invasion was based on false claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and links to Al-Qaeda, and although NATO's 2011 assault on Libya was based on that regime's repression of civilians, the threats both leaders posed to the United States and its massive multinational fossil fuel corporations were motivating factors for the conflicts intended to depose them.

Global North banks have also financed and profited off global fossil fuel dependence: Fossil fuel financing from the world's 60 largest banks has

reached \$5.5 trillion in the seven years since the adoption of the 2016 Paris Agreement, with \$669 billion in fossil fuel financing in 2022 alone.²⁹ The Royal Bank of Canada currently ranks as the top financier of fossil fuels, having provided fossil fuel companies \$41 billion in 2022 and \$252.5 billion since 2016.³⁰ But the US bank JPMorgan Chase ranks first in financing since 2016, with a staggering figure of \$434 billion (including \$39 billion in 2022 alone).³¹ Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group of Japan ranks as the top financier among Asian banks in 2022, with a figure of \$29.5 billion, while French bank BNP Paribas ranks first in Europe, with a figure of \$20 billion.³² Upstream oil and gas expansion is very concentrated, with 20 companies responsible for more than half of such expansion; and bank support for those companies is also concentrated, with

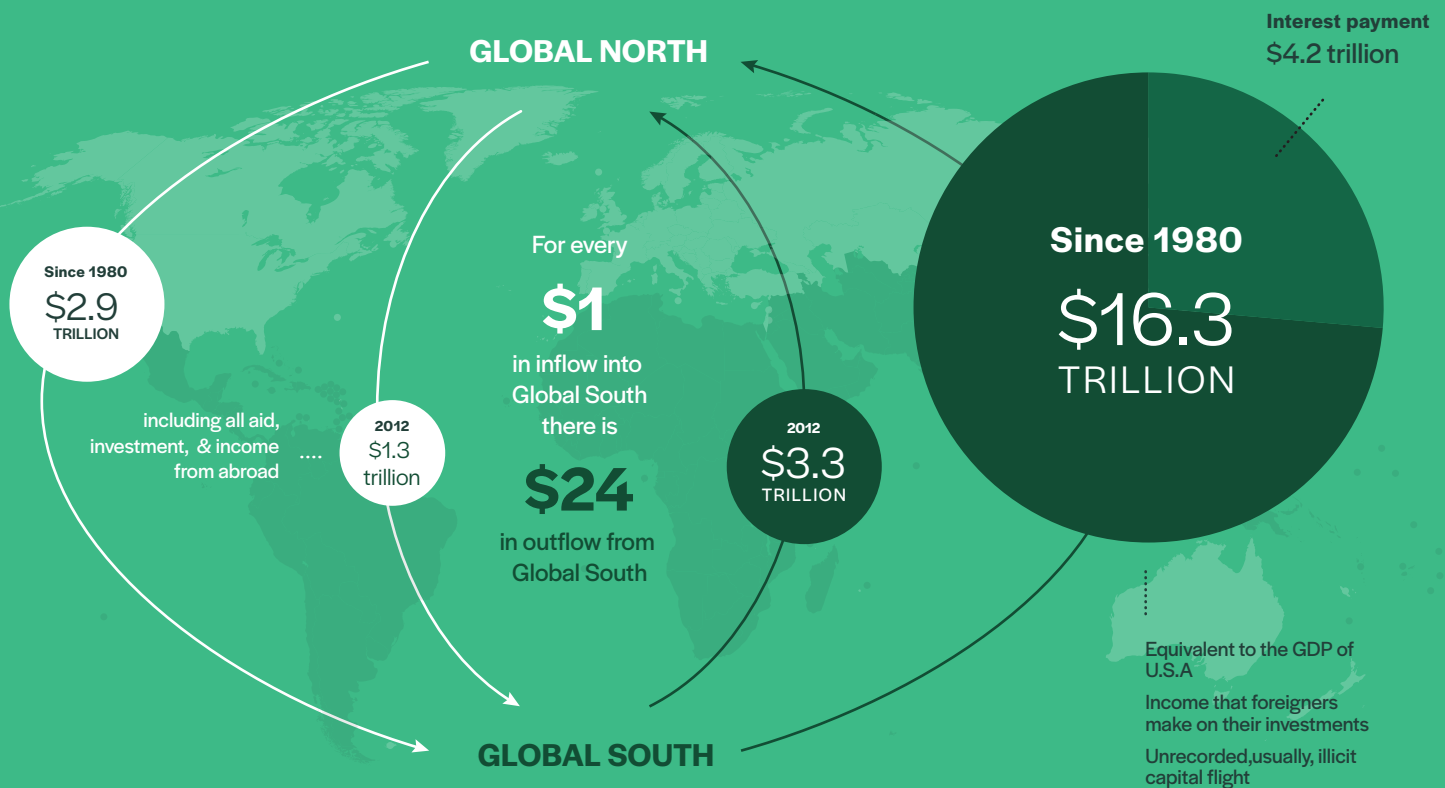
10 banks responsible for 58 percent of such companies' big-bank financing since the adoption of the Paris Agreement.³³ Critically, financial institutions can also profit off of renewables or a green economy, highlighting the need to target global fossil fuel dependence along with excessive corporate power and exploitative financing instruments.³⁴

Such processes of extractive colonial and racial capitalism have rendered the Global South and marginalized Global North communities especially vulnerable to subsequent climate crisis impacts:

Specifically, they have not only increased poverty and undermined the development of adequate infrastructure that might help communities cope with the ongoing and worsening climate crisis. They have also entrenched North-South relations of dependency

that have forced many such countries into deriving a relatively large percentage of their GDP from agriculture, forestry, and fishing, which are by their nature more vulnerable to a changing climate.³⁵ As of 2015, an estimated 79 percent of those experiencing poverty live in rural areas, with most rural people relying on activities within agri-food systems.³⁶ As such, a large majority of the world's poor depend on moderate weather patterns and seasonal changes for their livelihood—what will certainly be compromised as the climate crisis worsens, forcing many people to relocate when staying in place becomes untenable.³⁷ As the former UN high commissioner for refugees, Antonio Gutierrez, stated, such forced migrations “can exacerbate the competition for resources—water, food, grazing lands—and that competition can trigger conflict.”³⁸

Easing capital flow and restricting people movement



Source: “Financial Flows and Tax Haven: Combining to Limit the Lives of Billions of People” (2015)

Securitization as “Petro-Persecution”

As state roles have been redrawn to furnish a conduit for the more rapid distribution of what were once “public goods” into the hands of corporations and other private interests, *securitization* describes the development and intensification of state strategies to manage subsequent expulsions and conflicts.³⁹

Across the Global North and Global South, there are many examples of neoliberalism’s austerity and debt regimes being paired with security concerns vis-à-vis the expulsions born of such regimes: Greece’s financial crisis and the disputes over policies pushed for from the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, alongside what Human Rights Watch has described as the growing crisis of xenophobic violence toward immigrants and political refugees across the country; the British austerity narrative promoted by the Conservatives, alongside policies and bills preventing terrorism, such as the government’s Draft Investigatory Power Bill; and the growing use of force by state actors, such as deploying housing eviction officers, and growing control of citizen participation initiatives, such as neighborhood renewal partnerships in the United Kingdom and the United States, or citizen security programs across Latin America where police are key partners.⁴⁰

In anticipation of conflicts and expulsions precipitated and exacerbated by the climate crisis, the US and other Global North countries have been reassessing national security strategies and preparedness: For example, in 2008, the Center for a New American Security, alongside the US military, scientific institutes, public policy institutes, private corporations, national funding agencies, and news agencies carried out a two-day military exercise called the “Climate Change War Game” intended “to explore the national security consequences of climate change.”⁴¹ Driven by similar anxieties, a January 2019 US Department of Defense (DoD) report, entitled “Report on Effects of a Changing

Climate to the Department of Defense,” found that climate crisis-fueled wildfires, droughts, and flooding threatens a majority of mission-critical military bases and DoD operational plans.⁴² At the border, extreme vetting, surveillance, and information sharing has been a response to such security concerns. For example, the Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) makes the final determination on whether to approve resettlement applications, and its security review uses the resources and databases of numerous other national security agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Defense, and multiple US intelligence agencies.⁴³

While strengthening military installations and preparedness has been one response by Global North countries, the (further) militarization of non-military infrastructure has been another: For example, the US Department of Defense’s “Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap 2014” states that “in the US, state and local governments responding to the effects of extreme weather may seek increased Defense Support to Civil Authorities”—the process by which US military assets and personnel can be used to assist in missions normally carried out by civil authorities. Domestically and abroad, the report states, the “Department’s unique capability to provide logistical, material, and security assistance on a massive scale or in rapid fashion may be called upon with increasing frequency.”⁴⁴ So too is border enforcement undergoing increasing militarization. For example, as of 2019, the Pentagon has been preparing to loosen rules that bar troops from interacting with migrants entering the United States, expanding the military’s involvement in migration from across the southern border.⁴⁵

Among the “Petro-Persecuted”: Landless Workers

When located within a historical and justice-centered framework for climate action, wage workers in natural resource industries (and landless workers in general) across the Global South and Global North

alike can be considered one such class of people who face “petro-persecution.”

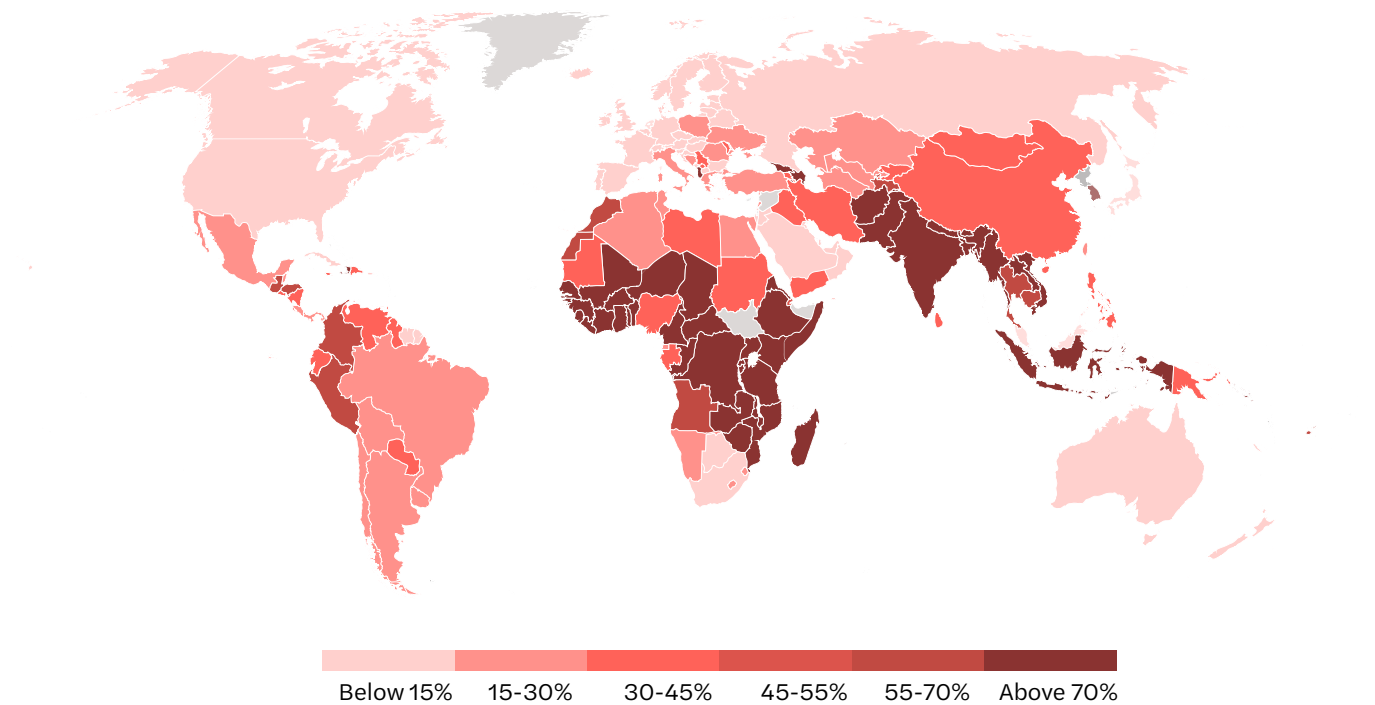
Not only are agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries more vulnerable to a changing climate, workers in these industries face hardships that are intensified by the climate crisis⁴⁶: Relying on such industries for wages and subsistence, they are heavily concentrated in areas with weak infrastructure, limited financial institutions, and few opportunities to diversify their income streams.⁴⁷ Further, many live in poorly constructed housing, compounding their vulnerability.⁴⁸ Under such conditions, and when faced with climate impacts, workers typically move to areas that are also highly exposed to climate impacts, including low-lying land that is susceptible to floods or landslides. For example, during the 2011 floods in Thailand, migrant workers

were among those most seriously affected: more than 800,000 migrants experienced the floods, with 600,000 of them stranded in areas without food, water, or electricity, leaving them at greater risk of repeated displacement.⁴⁹

Some existing labor agreements have modeled effective approaches to the resettlement of climate-induced displaced workers: Bilateral labor mobility agreements have been especially fruitful. Agreements between Spain and Colombia, and among island states, such as Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, and Australia, for example, have integrated into their seasonal worker programs considerations for the development of climate-affected areas. Within such agreements, workers from communities affected by natural disasters have also been given special consideration for work placement

Vulnerable employment worldwide

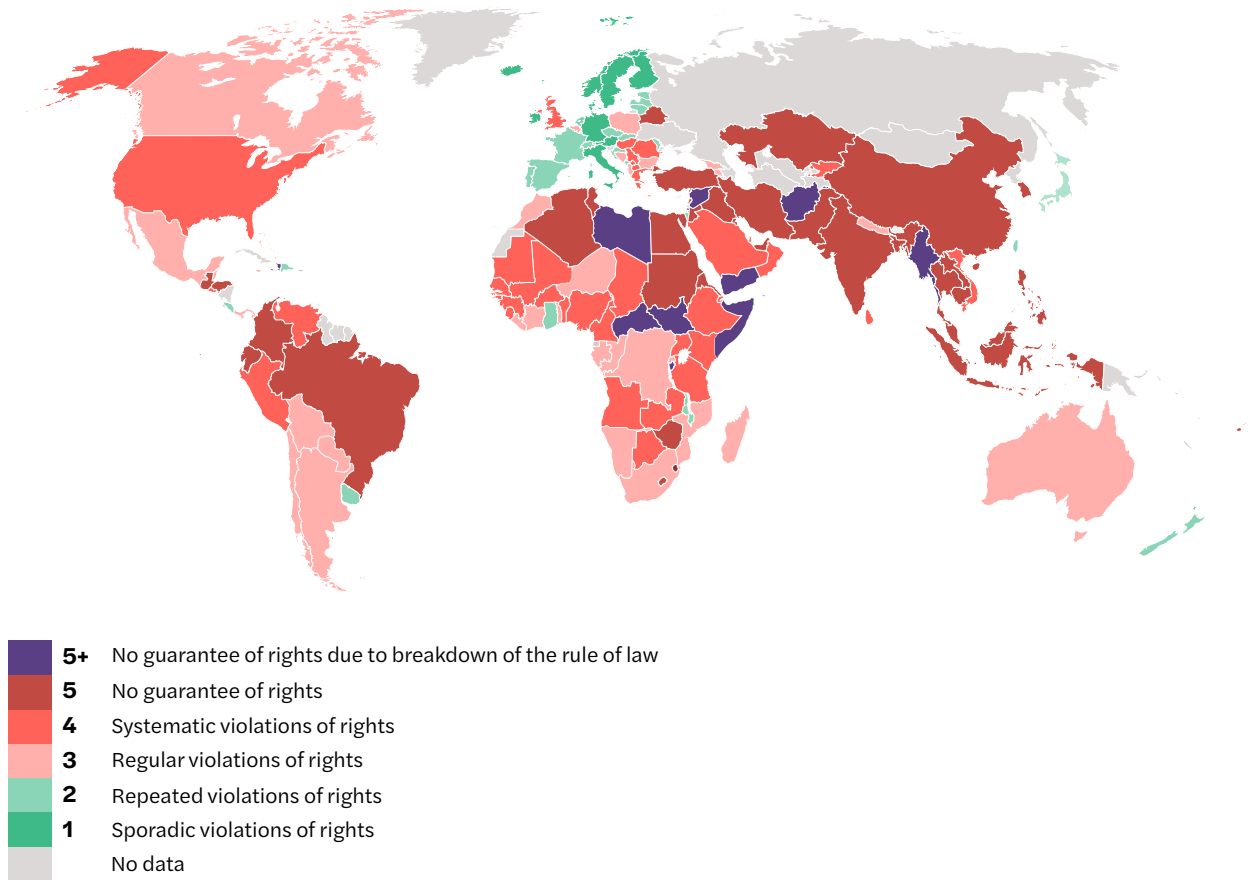
The percentage of own-account workers and contributing family workers as a share of total employment



Source: International Labour Organization

The state of workers' rights worldwide

Countries on the Global Rights Index ranking of workers' rights in 2023



Source: 2023 ITCU Global Rights Index

abroad. The benefits are clear: in the case of small island states, these arrangements have been instrumental in generating remittances in communities severely compromised by sea-level rise and flooding; and in Spain, temporary agricultural work visas are supplied to workers from Colombia, targeting people from high-risk zones for natural disasters, including volcanic eruption.⁵⁰

Yet, for wage workers in natural resource industries, resettlement programs and dynamics remain fraught: For example, ill-planned programs may result in more men migrating, thus disrupting familial networks; programs targeting “unskilled” and “low-skilled” workers may expose them to exploitation and abuse; and programs may be too small

in scope to deliver significant benefits.⁵¹ Further, without comprehensive resettlement strategies, displaced wage workers may be driven into informal economies, thus perpetuating “dual economies” and placing downward pressure on wages for all workers.⁵² Finally, existing labor migration schemes are largely information-poor, undermining their potential. For example, there is limited data in many low- and middle-income countries concerning labor migration patterns, the skills of native-born and migrant workers, and labor market needs—information that would be necessary for linking genuine labor shortages to improving the skills of workers in communities that are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change.⁵³

Ultimately, legally tying immigration status to employment is one expression of “petro-persecution”:

As Harsha Walia argues, such connections turn migrant workers into a “state-sanctioned pool of unfree, indentured laborers.”⁵⁴ Among other tactics, migrant workers are kept compliant through threats of termination and deportation. Such threats work in tandem with anti-union practices, together revealing the crucial connection between their migration status and precarious labor position. Further, migrant workers are de facto segregated from citizen workers and unable to access the same labor protections and public services.⁵⁵ It is for this reason that Walia argues that the “commodified inclusion” of migrant workers—climate-induced displaced workers, and migrant workers in general—as “temporary workers with deliberately deflated labor power” guarantees capital accumulation and is in a “continuum with exclusion, rather than in opposition to it.”⁵⁶

A Refugee-Centered Strategy for Just Transitions

In this light, oft-deployed language such as “migrant crisis” and the corresponding “migrant invasion” in the Global North are pretexts for creating and managing Global South labor precarity,⁵⁷ and instruments to help facilitate the continued transfer of wealth from the Global South to the Global North.⁵⁸ At the same time, communities across the Global South have looked to land reform as a strategy for managing widespread labor precarity and various “migrant crises.” Broadly, such land reform efforts entail the de-concentration and democratization of land access, land use, and the benefits of land use, accompanied by the provisioning of capital and infrastructure to support new and expanded agroecological production and localized markets. Addressing the root of the problem, the scaling up agroecological methods, guided by such principles and practices, is a primary mechanism of building robust, diversified and climate-resilient economies and just transitions across the Global South.⁵⁹

A key barrier remains in the work of climate, agri-food, and environmental organizations across the Global South—namely, money. A recent Othering & Belonging Institute survey on work toward just transitions in Africa found that, for more than 90 percent of African organizations, funding is the primary type of material support they need to achieve their organizational goals.⁶⁰ Although efforts to transform central banks and develop regional currencies across the Global South show promise with regard to building robust, diversified and climate-resilient economies, there remains a need to shift policies and practices of Global North away from the exploitation of Global South land, resources, and labor, and to do so in conjunction with reparative justice-based compensation payments. Collectively, such efforts would address the core of the climate crisis and crises of climate-induced migration.

Policy Recommendations: Protections, Payments, and Resilience Via “Loss and Damage”

IN SUM, the criteria for refugee protections are place-based (i.e., national) in ways that preclude a global and international response to the climate crisis; and global and international mechanisms for exacting reparations from Global North countries, institutions, and industries find steep resistance when it comes to being embedded within international law and reshaping international finance and economic governance. This brief closes with recommendations on how to operationalize the framework of “petro-persecution” across national and international law, international finance, and international economic governance, and through the newly-established “loss and damage” fund.

Policy Intervention 1: Recognizing Climate Refugees

Legal Recognition of Climate-induced Displaced Persons via a Convention Relating to the Status of Climate Refugees or Amendment to the 1951 Refugee Convention

The premier comprehensive and legally-binding tool for displaced persons, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, does not explicitly recognize climatic and other environmental factors as criteria to define who is a refugee. Furthermore, the definition of “persecution” within the 1951 Refugee

Convention conflicts with the nature of the climate crisis, given the impossibility of determining the “actor(s)” of persecution and linking their actions/inactions to specific cases of climate-induced displacement. Thus, the core issue here concerns the effectiveness of rights and legal certainty in the context of climate-induced displacement, and the definition of “persecution” upon which such rights must be based.

Recommendation

This brief proposes two possible pathways forward: The creation of a new refugee convention, the Convention Relating to the Status of Climate Refugees, or the amendment of the 1951 Refugee Convention via a new protocol to define and give legal protection to persons displaced across international borders due to climate change.

This brief recommends that the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and other relevant United Nations agencies collaborate to provide guidance to the UN General Assembly on the development of this new convention or protocol. This brief also recommends that these and other relevant UN agencies should consult with national governments, civil society organizations and other relevant institutions on the development of this new convention or legal protocol.

As an interim measure until such a convention or

protocol is developed, and in accordance with the recommendations of Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, this brief recommends that all countries be encouraged to develop national legislation that provides humanitarian visas for persons displaced across international borders due to climate change.⁶¹ Additionally, this brief recommends that regional human rights bodies should be encouraged to expand their definition of refugees to include such persons.

Recommendation

This brief recommends that the agreement or protocol, whichever offers the path of least resistance, must satisfy two major requirements: First, it must qualify individuals and communities that cannot avail themselves of government relief from the effects of the climate crisis as those who are “persecuted” and thus allowed to formally make a claim for asylum in a country of their choosing. Second, it must do so without demanding that such status be linked to a specific “actor” of persecution (whether a private or public entity, or agricultural or industrial process).

Under either agreement, and in conjunction with the existing circumstances covered under the 1951 Refugee Convention, “climate refugees” would be guaranteed legal protection as follows:

1. In situations of sudden- or slow-onset disasters (not necessarily linked to the climate crisis) if authorities deny reasonable assistance and protection to certain people because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, and as a consequence expose them to treatment amounting to persecution. The same is true where a natural disaster impact meets the threshold of a persecution because it is the consequence of a respective governmental policy with a discriminatory impact on a specific group of persons possessing such attributes. Such circumstances are covered under the existing 1951 Refugee Convention.

2. In situations of violence, serious human rights violations, or armed conflict triggered by disputes over shrinking natural resources if persecutory measures are based on the race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion of affected persons. Such circumstances are covered under the existing 1951 Refugee Convention.
3. In situations where a person (regardless of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion) fleeing the effects of the climate crisis might be fleeing a nation and government that has not turned against its citizens but rather cannot protect its citizens. Some of the people experiencing the most disastrous effects of the climate crisis are living within countries that have long recognized the issue at hand and have appealed to the international community for support. A new climate refugee convention or revision of the existing 1951 Refugee Convention would account for this by not demanding identification of a specific “persecutor,” especially one internal to one’s country of origin.

Policy Intervention 2: Fortifying and Expanding “Loss And Damage”

Linking Robust and Inclusive “Loss and Damages” to International Law

In the context of the climate crisis, there will be increasing pressure placed on the infrastructure designed to manage the environmental change itself in the country of origin as well as asylum, reception, and integration systems in the receiving country. Further, the growth of refugee populations has put pressure on local schools, housing, and other institutions and services. These pressures are distributed unevenly across geographies, exposing faults in systems of multilevel migration governance

and the disproportionate impact of climate-induced displacement and resettlement around the world.

While there are agencies, task forces, commissions, and other transnational bodies tasked with streamlining the connections between national and local governments, agencies, and organizations, a key issue remains: imposing climate refugee obligations onto the international community would cost a great deal of money because doing so would multiply the number of individuals that could apply for asylum, attain refugee status, and be resettled.

These costs lay behind the hesitation to legally recognize and protect climate refugees. Thus, the legal basis of “loss and damage” and obligations of “petro-persecutors” must be fortified in tandem with efforts to recognize climate-induced displacement as among such “loss and damage,” and efforts to recognize developing countries as those that bear the brunt of such climate impacts.

Recommendation

The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM), created at COP19 in 2013, acknowledges that “loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change includes, and in some cases involves more than, that which can be reduced by adaptation.”⁶² The Paris Agreement—an agreement within the UNFCCC—provides for the continuation of the WIM. However, the agreement explicitly states that its inclusion “does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation.”⁶³

The inclusion of this clause was the condition on which developed countries, particularly the United States, agreed to include a reference to “loss and damage” in the Paris Agreement. This brief recommends removing this clause within the Paris Agreement in order to help secure a legal basis for liability and/or compensation, and thus help secure payments from “petro-persecutor” countries and industries.

Recommendation

At COP27, countries agreed to establish a “Loss and Damage” fund that would address what was long considered a weakness of both the Warsaw International Mechanism and the Paris Agreement. A clear pathway to ensuring the financial obligations of “petro-persecutors” and redistributing resources accordingly, this fund is a key exercise in climate justice as distributional justice. As such, every effort must be made to avoid a definitional narrowing of what is considered “loss and damage,” who contributes to the fund, and who receives such funds.

This brief recommends that the “loss and damage” fund should benefit all countries, and certainly all developing countries—and not be limited to “particularly vulnerable” countries, which countries like Japan have advocated for. This brief recommends that the fund also operate under the principles of equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR).

Additionally, while the term “loss and damage” is not yet defined in the Paris Agreement, this brief recommends that the rights of people displaced by climate change should fall within the umbrella of this term.⁶⁴ Specifically, this brief recommends funding arrangements that assist persons displaced across international borders due to climate change in order to address their vulnerabilities and aid their resettlement.

Recommendation

By COP28, the Transitional Committee comprised of representatives from 24 countries will have met three times to discuss what form the fund should take and the specific financing mechanisms through which it will operate. Because the Committee is an exercise not just in distributive justice but also in procedural justice, this brief recommends ongoing commitment to its success. Specifically, this brief recommends robust and effective internal communication strategies, and thorough transparency regarding its activities, including active collaboration with observers.

Policy Intervention 3: Linking Displacement and “Loss And Damage” through Research

Linking Research and Recommendations on Habitability and Displacement with National Resettlement Plans

If one is a refugee, there are three solutions to the persecution one has faced: 1) returning safely and voluntarily to the country from which one has fled; 2) integrating into the country to which one fled; and 3) resettlement in a third country. In the context of climate-induced displacement, one challenge is determining the extent to which people who flee from a short-term natural disaster are obliged to return once the danger has passed and the devastation cleared, and the extent to which people need to flee from an impending long-term natural disaster.

A key legal impediment to the forced return of people in such circumstances is whether, in forcing return, the host state would expose the individual to such risk again in the near future or to a place where one’s livelihood is impossible to recover altogether.⁶⁵ In this light, the G77’s demands at COP25 that the Warsaw International Mechanism be given teeth through the creation of a technical research and support body would have clear implications concerning the recognition and protection of climate refugees.

Recommendation

This brief recommends strengthening existing research agendas on the likelihood that the natural disaster in question would recur and strengthen under the climate crisis, as well as scientific research on the long-term transformations a specific region will experience. Specifically, this brief recommends

strengthening the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage by undertaking, *inter alia*, the following functions:

- Enhancing knowledge and understanding of comprehensive risk management approaches to address “loss and damage” associated with the adverse effects of the climate crisis, including slow-onset impacts.
- Strengthening dialogue, coordination, coherence, and synergies among relevant stakeholders.
- Enhancing action and support, including finance, technology, and capacity building, to address “loss and damage” associated with the adverse effects of the climate crisis, so as to enable countries to undertake actions.

Strengthening the Warsaw International Mechanism in this way would aid the pooling of scientific knowledge and resources concerning the duration, intensity, and frequency of short- and long-term natural disasters and their impacts, with key implications for climate refugees and risk of forced return.

Recommendation

The Task Force on Displacement (TFD) was established in 2015 at COP21. In its first phase, the TFD focused on developing recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimize, and address climate-induced displacement. A key goal of the TFD at present is bringing together partners and relevant stakeholders to identify and support the needs and efforts of developing countries vis-à-vis climate-induced displacement and planned relocation. This brief recommends strengthening the links between the Warsaw International Mechanism and the TFD by further integrating the resettlement plans of host countries, including plans of forced return.

Policy Intervention 4: Linking Displacement and “Loss and Damage” through Labor and Land Reform

Strengthening Protections for Landless Workers While Building Robust and Diversified Climate-Resilient Economies

With the establishment of the “loss and damage” finance facility at COP27, there is now greater possibility of addressing the underlying conditions of the climate crisis. This can be done by transitioning from global processes of uneven, unsustainable, and extractive development, largely driven by the Global North at the expense of the Global South, toward diversified local and regenerative economies. Because it is one such means of ameliorating climate impacts, the opportunities afforded by the “loss and damage” finance facility must be pursued in tandem with continued efforts to protect peoples forced to migrate due to climate impacts.

Considered a key class of people who face “petro-persecution,” attention to wage workers in natural resource industries in particular (and landless workers in general) affords a policy strategy with this dual purpose. That is, not only have peoples been made landless through uneven, unsustainable, and extractive development across the Global North and Global South alike. Such peoples are often forced to move due to climate impacts, given how they are often concentrated in areas with weak infrastructure, limited financial institutions, and few opportunities to diversify their income streams.

Recommendation

There are several practical measures needed to support the development of labor mobility pathways to facilitate the resettlement of climate

refugees, which would aid landless workers and receiving countries alike. This brief recommends the establishment of research and policy priorities concerning labor migration within the Warsaw International Mechanism for Climate Loss and Damage and the Task Force on Displacement. Such priorities must include:

- Strengthening national capacity to support the collection and dissemination of reliable labor market information and analysis of environmental impacts.
- Mobilizing national expertise to map climate vulnerabilities at the regional and national levels with a focus on climate-vulnerable sectors and the populations that fill them.
- Developing mechanisms, regional standards, and bilateral arrangements to support the portability and recognition of social security arrangements for workers outside their own countries.
- Developing adaptation plans that link the adverse effects of the climate crisis with a greater need for legal, safe, fair, and regular channels for labor mobility.

The high cost of migration makes labor mobility an unfeasible option for the majority of workers in climate-vulnerable communities, particularly in developing countries. For labor mobility to play a role in adapting to the climate crisis in ways that support landless workers and receiving countries alike, such targeted goals could represent means of reducing costs, securing work and humane working conditions for migrants, and developing the economies of host countries.

Recommendation

In light of the fact that the high cost of migration makes labor mobility an unfeasible option for most workers in climate-vulnerable communities, and in light of the historical and structural conditions

that have given rise to such climate-vulnerable communities, efforts should also be made to link “loss and damage” to the building of robust and diversified climate-resilient economies that can withstand climate impacts and mitigate the need for climate-induced migration altogether.

This brief recommends that all countries should be encouraged to develop comprehensive land reform legislation that is geared towards the democratization of land access, use, and the benefits of land’s use, and that is accompanied by the provision of capital and infrastructure to support new and expanded agroecological production and localized markets.⁶⁶ Such efforts would be in alignment with community-based strategies to develop resilience against climate impacts, especially in the Global South.⁶⁷

This brief also recommends that “loss and damages” payments for the Global South should be linked to such redistributive policies intended to eradicate grossly unequal landownership and oppressive tenancy patterns—not only within countries but also between countries, especially between the Global North and Global South. Such efforts would be in alignment with community-based demands upon Global North governments, civil societies, and corporations in service of climate-resilient local and regional economies and development trajectories.⁶⁸

Policy Intervention 5: The Just Financing of “Loss and Damage”

The Just Pooling and Redistributing Funds for Climate-Induced “Loss and Damage”

Within the “loss and damage” context, market instruments can be distinguished from “solidarity instruments” based on whether a population is at risk or the international community assumes the

majority of fiscal responsibility. In general, market instruments place responsibility directly on the communities at risk, for example, by expecting them to pay an insurance premium, whereas solidarity instruments transfer responsibility to the international community, including countries with greater historical responsibility for emissions.⁶⁹ Gradually and over time, solidarity-based proposals, including public sector interventions, taxation, debt cancellation, and transfers from developed countries to vulnerable countries have been downplayed, while private sector insurance-type interventions have been given a central role.⁷⁰

Disentangling “loss and damage” funding from international capital markets and harmful macroeconomic policies, and moving toward solidarity instruments, would be a necessary condition of climate justice.⁷¹ Specifically, such solidarity instruments would aid in struggles against the near-universal commodification of survival—from food to housing to healthcare—that undermine the safe and dignified resettlement of peoples displaced by the climate crisis. Such solidarity instruments would also help build the economic and political power needed for just transitions from extractive economies to regenerative and climate-resilient ones. Countless climate, agri-food, and environmental movements from across the Global South have demanded such instruments to aid in their struggles against the climate crisis.⁷²

Recommendation

The “polluter-pays principle” enshrined by the 1972 Stockholm and 1992 Rio de Janeiro declarations aims to ensure that those who produce pollution bear the costs of managing it, and thus aims to internalize the external costs for climate change mitigation and incentivize a shift towards decarbonization.⁷³ In light of the establishment of global fund for “loss and damage” at COP27, it is necessary to consider innovative ways of applying the “polluter-pays principle” to finance it.

This brief recommends serious consideration and use of several taxation and levy instruments that are directly related to activities or products which are responsible for greenhouse gas emissions. These include a fossil fuel extraction levy—a global tax imposed on oil, gas and coal producers for each ton of coal, barrel of oil or cubic meter of gas extracted, at a level that would reflect how much CO₂ is embedded in each ton of fossil fuel extracted.⁷⁴ Although various fossil fuel levies exist around the world, there has yet to be a global tax on fossil fuels.

This brief also recommends the use of taxation and levy instruments that target the profits of fossil fuel companies. For example, a higher tax rate on sudden and disproportionately greater profits (i.e., a “windfall tax”) could be directed toward fossil fuel companies that have benefited from and during specific political, economic, and environmental crises. Finally, this brief recommends that these instruments can be accompanied by tax instruments not directly related to greenhouse gas emissions, such as a financial transaction tax, which would target the high daily volume of transactions on financial and currency markets, notably in developed countries.

By linking these taxation and levy instruments—on fossil fuel companies and activities, and on Global North-heavy financial transactions—to international law, such approaches to the financing of a global “loss and damage” fund would take seriously how **Global North countries have benefited from and reinforced global fossil fuel dependence, at the expense of Global South countries.**

Recommendation

The topic of “loss and damage” first emerged in international climate negotiations as early as 1991, when Vanuatu, speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (SIDS), proposed an international insurance pool to compensate SIDS for damages caused by rising sea levels.⁷⁵ At COP27, alongside the establishment of a “loss and damage” fund, the Vulnerable

20 Group of Finance Ministers (V20) and the Group of Seven (G7) launched the “Global Shield against Climate Risks” that would provide pre-arranged insurance and disaster protection funding after climate events.⁷⁶ This brief recommends the establishment of an additional international insurance pool to compensate host countries that resettle climate refugees. These insurance pools would cover two distinct yet related dimensions of the climate crisis.

Insurance premiums may be another cost to hard-hit countries that have contributed least to the climate crisis.⁷⁷ Thus, although such insurance pools would help ensure that the international community assumes the bulk of fiscal responsibility vis-à-vis the mitigation of climate impacts, this brief recommends higher premiums for countries with greater historical responsibility for emissions and the destruction of carbon sinks. Further, insurance penetration in developing countries remains low, and in poor countries, on average, only 2 percent of total losses owing to weather-related events are insured.⁷⁸ In conjunction with historically-specific premiums, this brief recommends strengthening the ability of poorer countries to claim losses and receive adequate compensation.

Recommendation

At present, G7 countries owe low- and middle-income countries \$13.3 trillion in unpaid development aid and climate funding, according to Oxfam International.⁷⁹ Despite failing to meet these obligations, G7 countries are demanding that developing countries pay a combined \$507 billion in debt repayments through 2028.⁸⁰ In 2023, such debt payments will reach their highest level in 25 years.⁸¹ These repayment demands would further impose devastating austerity on the Global South. For every \$1 the IMF encourages poorer countries to spend on public goods—from healthcare and education to climate action—it has told them to cut four times more through austerity measures.⁸²

In addition to the taxation, levy, and insurance methods of exacting “loss and damage” payments

to Global South countries from Global North countries and industries, this brief recommends that Global North countries outright cancel the debt of Global South countries. As interim and immediately available measures for tackling the climate crisis and building climate resilience, this brief recommends targeting the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) lending tactics. Specifically, the IMF has imposed significant surcharges on countries that have had to undertake large borrowings and are unable to pay their debts back quickly. This brief recommends that the IMF end such procyclical and regressive interest rate surcharges on its loans.

Finally, this brief recommends another measure directed at the IMF. Introduced in 1969, IMF Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) are distributed to central banks or national treasuries, which can either hold them or exchange them with other member countries for cash. Yet, since they were first introduced, SDRs have been allocated in ways that have privileged the United States and European colonial powers, locked in unequal representation in global economic governance, and undermined Global South prospects for tackling the climate crisis and building climate resilience. In this light, this brief recommends that the IMF eliminate the allocation system based on members' "quota" and instead build a new "quota" based on the problem of "petro-persecution" and reparative principles of climate justice.⁸³

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The Othering & Belonging Institute brings together researchers, community stakeholders, and policy-makers to identify and challenge the barriers to an inclusive, just, and sustainable society in order to create transformative change.