

# Protecting and supervising human rights of climate refugees



## General Assembly

## **Introduction to committee**

The General Assembly (UNGA) is the main organ of the United Nations. It is in charge of policy-making for all member states. Providing a forum for multilateral discussions of international issues. UNGA has regular meetings from September to December in order to discuss the agenda and how they are going to lead the resolutions in the international scenario.

## **Human rights**

On December 10th, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) where for the first time human rights were universally recognized for them to be protected. This paved the way for the adoption of more than seventy human right treaties.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; human rights are rights all individuals have simply for existing as human beings. These rights are inherent to each of us, despite nationality, sex, ethnic origin, color, religion, language or any other condition. Being universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent, equal and non-discriminatory. As we all know, the most fundamental right is the right to life, followed by the right to food, water, health, liberty, education and work. All of this with the objective to achieve an adequate standard of living for every human being. \*the word right is repeated many times\*

## **Climate crisis**

It isn't news that nowadays we are facing a climate crisis, caused by climate change which has been accelerated in the past decades thanks to the human impact on our planet. This is a global threat that affects humankind without distinction, and risks the guarantee of human rights. Unfortunately, we have not taken the time to focus on this crisis and its impact. There is a major disaster incoming and individuals are not conscious about how each action affects the evolution of this problem, causing climate change to be irrefutable. Anyway, scientists have proved that there are still many ways to mitigate the impacts of this climate crisis.

Rising temperatures, extreme weather, natural disasters, rising sea levels, acidifying oceans and burning forests are just a few examples of the repercussions of climate change. Affecting in diverse areas of human development and making it impossible for the international community to have a life in dignity.

### **Climate refugees and global response**

Vulnerable people, often living in poor and fragile communities and countries all across the globe - those who contributed the least to global warming are being disproportionately affected, paying the price and being hit the hardest by the crisis. Living in climate “hotspots” where there are frequent deficiencies in supplies to adapt to an increasingly adverse environment. Reflecting the global reality and amplifying the inequalities and injustices in our world.

Climate refugees are those forcibly displaced due to the effects of climate change in their place of residence. Most people displaced in this context, remain in their country and are internally displaced. In this case, the state has the obligation to guarantee and protect their human rights. For those who are displaced across borders the problem is wider because, even though the existence of this problem and a considerable amount of people suffering this situation, the concept of climate refugees does not fully exist in international refugee law, nor is it recognized by the United Nations. Meaning that people who are forced to migrate by climate change, are not eligible for protection under international law. The United Nations Convention on Refugees, refers to forced displacement / refugees to those who are forced to leave their homes due to conflict, violence and human rights violations.

Yet, instruments like the OAU Convention (1969) and the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (1984), play a very important role in the protection of rights for climate refugees by offering a wider definition, extending to people fleeing from “events seriously disturbing public order”.

\*there's no cohesion between paragraphs\*

Principle 1 of The Stockholm Declaration (1972), states that there is a fundamental right to freedom, equality, and acceptable living circumstances in an environment of sufficient quality to support a life of dignity and well-being. Acknowledging the relationship between environment and human rights.

Giving the opportunity to this kind of refugees to be considered refugees and not migrants, nevertheless, they are still left under an uncertain law.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made a special report in which it mentions that climate change related outcomes such as desertification, land degradation, greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems and the stressed global food system are worsening the living conditions, therefore causing forced displacement. Until now, the response has been limited and protection for the affected remains inadequate. The issue has been addressed in multiple conferences, as the concern keeps growing among nations, but the crisis has not been treated as a crisis, minimizing the legal problem climate refugees are now facing.

Specialized organizations such as the United Nations Refugee Agency are urging their members to:

1. Defend and assist countries in their efforts to prevent major repercussions and to prepare measures for future disasters. In that way, forced displacement will be cut down.
2. Engage against the increasing and asymmetric impact of the climate emergency, emphasizing in the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors - in particular the displaced and their hosts.
3. Keep the goals set out in the diverse international cooperation agreements such as the Paris Agreement (2015).
4. To ensure the protection of all those displaced in the context of climate change, centered in ensuring dignity, safety and rights.

Diverse frameworks encourage cooperation between nations regarding migration and the implementation of solutions to mitigate the massive migrations caused by the climate crisis. Causing climate refugees to be easily perceived and therefore for them to have a suitable protection.

In July 2022, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the universal right to a secure, healthy, and ecologically sustainable environment. Also calling all international actors to “scale up efforts” to ensure this right. Allowing people to challenge environmentally destructive policies under human rights legislation and highlight the importance of the climate crisis and its effects, such as climate refugees. \*not cohesive with the rest of the text\*

*“We need to invest now in preparedness to mitigate future protection needs and prevent further climate caused displacement. Waiting for disaster to strike is not an option.”*

- Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

### **Guiding questions**

Are climate refugees an actual problem in your region?

Is your country taking actions to help this crisis?

Does your agenda consider the effects of climate change?

Is your nation willing to help mitigate the effects of climate changes?

Should international law recognize climate refugees?

Is there an existent framework to recognize this type of migration?

What actions will you implement for the refugees?

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