



Climate Migration and the UN Refugee Convention

July 28, 2021

Today marks the 70th Anniversary of the UN Refugee Convention, which defines refugees as those with a well-founded fear of returning to their country of origin due to persecution on the basis of “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” It outlines the rights afforded to refugees, including safety, liberty, and education, as well as the obligations of states who receive them.

Now, seven decades after its ratification, some propose expanding the category to include climate migrants. Extreme weather events, which are growing more frequent and severe, have internally displaced an average of 24 million people annually since [2008](#). The [World Bank](#) estimates that by 2050, 143 million people will be displaced by climate change in Latin American, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia alone.

This displacement stems from increasingly extreme weather events, such as tornadoes, floods, droughts, and wildfires, in addition to sea level and temperature rise. The changing weather also impacts agricultural industries, leading to economic and food insecurity, and exacerbating conflicts.

Granting refugee status to those displaced by the climate crisis is one potential way to address the growing threat of climate displacement. EBSC also recognizes the responsibility that the U.S. and other western nations bear for climate displacement, having contributed disproportionately to the climate crisis, while the Global South experiences the worst of its effects.

The climate crisis is set to become the greatest force of displacement globally. We must act to both combat the crisis by divesting from fossil fuels, and to support the people most vulnerable to displacement.

Read more about climate displacement:

[Climate Refugees | Othering & Belonging Institute](#)

[Climate Refugees: No International Definition, Recognition Or Protections : Goats and Soda](#)

[America is the worst polluter in the history of the world. We should let climate change refugees resettle here.](#)

[Climate Change Will Force Us to Rethink Migration and Asylum](#)

[The Great Climate Migration Has Begun](#)

Have you or someone you know been displaced by the effects of the climate crisis? Please email sanctuaryvoices@eastbaysanctuary.org if you are interested in sharing your story.