

Amnesty International UK

BRIEFING



SCOTLAND: CLIMATE EMERGENCY MARCH 2019

Ahead of the Scottish Green Party debate on the climate emergency, Amnesty International would like to highlight why we are campaigning for governments to take urgent action on climate change.

- Amnesty International has warned that climate change could become the greatest inter-generational human rights violation in history.
- The link between climate change and human rights has been established by reports of several UN agencies and recognised in eight resolutions of the Human Rights Council.
- Amnesty International stands with all children and young people who have organised and taken part in school strikes for climate action. This is an important social justice movement that is mobilising thousands of people to peacefully call on governments to stop climate change.

Climate change is a human rights violation

Climate change is a human rights issue not only because its devastating impacts affect the enjoyment of human rights, but also because it is a man-made phenomenon which can be mitigated. The solutions to climate change have been known for decades.

The link between climate change and human rights has been established by reports of several UN agencies and offices, several UN Special Rapporteurs, and recognised in [eight resolutions of the Human Rights Council](#). Several UN Treaty Bodies have also expressed concerns on the human rights impacts of climate change.

The Human Rights Committee adopted a new General Comment on the [Right to Life](#) which recognised that climate change, along with environmental degradation and unsustainable development, “constitute some of the most pressing and serious threats to the ability of present and future generations to enjoy the right to life”. In 2018, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) [published a General Recommendation](#) entirely dedicated to examining the gender-related aspects of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change.

In 2018, Secretary General of Amnesty International, Kumi Naidoo testified to the Philippines Commission on Human Rights' investigation into 47 'carbon major' companies, and their responsibility for human rights abuses resulting from climate change, stating:

“There is no question anymore about whether climate change is a human rights issue or not... The Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has confirmed that not exceeding a global warming of 1.5°C is an absolute imperative to protect human rights in the coming years. It has also sent a new, compelling wake-up call, as it has shown that we only have 12 years to halve carbon emissions in order to aim for the 1.5°C target. Continuing to rely on fossil fuel extraction and production will bring humanity to the brink of collapse. It is a selfish, short-sighted and suicidal approach. Carbon majors cannot continue to put their economic interests before the public interest of human survival and respect for human rights.”

Climate change will cause and impact on an array of human rights issues including mass migration due to drought; flooding and other extreme weather events; armed conflict caused or exacerbated by resource scarcity; interference with the right to food, to development, to water and sanitation, to health, work and ultimately the right to life. The negative impacts of climate change are disproportionately borne by persons and communities already in disadvantageous situations owing to geography, poverty, gender, age, disability, cultural or ethnic background, among others, that have historically contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions.

Millions of people are suffering from the catastrophic effects of extreme disasters exacerbated by climate change right now

From prolonged drought in sub-Saharan Africa to devastating tropical storms sweeping across Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. During the summer months for the northern hemisphere in 2018, communities from the Arctic Circle to Greece, Japan, Pakistan and the USA experienced devastating heatwaves and wildfires that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people.

In March 2019 hundreds of people were confirmed dead and thousands others missing or displaced after cyclone Idai hit Mozambique, Zimbabwe and parts of Malawi. Mozambique and Zimbabwe are vulnerable to flooding during the rainy season, with previous disasters having caused fatalities and left people homeless. The number of cyclones and extreme floods have been increasing in Southern Africa due to the change in weather patterns likely caused by climate change. As the effects of climate change intensify, these extreme weather conditions can be expected to revisit us more frequently.

Amnesty International stands with school children who went out on strike across Scotland, the UK and globally for climate action

On March 15th Around 60 planned protests, organised by Youth Strike 4 Climate Change, took place across the UK with large protests outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, and George Square in Glasgow.

Secretary general of Amnesty international Kumi Naidoo praised striking students, saying: *"Instead of criticising young people for taking part in these protests...we should be asking why governments are getting away with playing truant on climate action"*.

Amnesty International's director in Scotland Naomi McAuliffe said it is *"educational and empowering"* for schoolchildren to be involved in the climate strikes. "Young people are taking action on the most catastrophic issue that will be facing them throughout their lives. It is absolutely legitimate that they hold governments and politicians to account for something they and their children will be living with the consequences of, long after we're gone.", she said.

I hope that this briefing is of help, do get in touch if you require further information on any of the issues raised within this briefing.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SCOTLAND OFFICE

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