

If We Respond To The Genocide In Palestine The Same Way We're Responding To The Climate Crisis...

- By Anthony Karefa Rogers-Wright, Black Agenda Report.
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- Educate!



Above photo: Illustration from Institute for Policy Studies.

We Should Expect Many More Lost Lives.

The climate crisis and genocide in Gaza share the same root: capitalism's willingness to sacrifice the masses. Yet, the institutions built to resist have instead become accomplices.

In 2018, Seattle-based journalist – Charles Mudede – wrote a piece entitled, “The Fact is Nothing is Going to be Done About Climate Change Until it Kills A Lot of White People .” Therein he remarks, “What is between climate change and meaningful human action is simply white American lives. As long as they are not directly threatened, we can continue business as usual.” This may very well have been true seven years ago, but since then we have witnessed the deaths of plenty of white folk from Europe to the United States due to climate-exacerbated events including, but not limited to, wildfires, hurricanes, and extreme flooding. And in many cases, these deaths crossed class lines as we just saw in Texas where a major flooding event took over 130 lives , including over 20 young girls while attending a summer camp that primarily services affluent families.

The loss of white lives has not resulted in a national or global response to the climate crisis at requisite scale. And this includes the perfunctory annual global climate conferences, the United Nations’ Conference of the Parties (COP) that has failed to produce a comprehensive and collective initiative to dismantle the climate crisis and its root causes, nor fairly compensate and protect those most vulnerable – chiefly those residing in the global south and intentionally underdeveloped nations who shoulder a disproportionate burden of climate impacts even though they bear little

responsibility for establishing, maintaining and exacerbating the climate crisis. This raises major questions as to why these material conditions continue even when the result is the increasing loss of white lives, including, in increasing cases, the wealthy.

In the same vein, as the world witnesses and observes, arguably the most profound denial of human rights and general humanity in a generation as Palestinians are subjected to war crimes including genocide, ethnic cleansing, and starvation as a tactic of war, the international human rights network continues an anemic campaign that will not result in a cessation of the Zionist ethnostate of Israel's wanton and acrimonious activities nor allow the Palestinians to realize self-determination, agency, or even the basic ability to be viewed as human. This too raises major questions that must be explored and deciphered – lives are literally hanging in the balance as these questions are navigated.

In answering these questions, we must look to the institutions – non-profit organizations, think tanks, and other formations – whose missions purport to advance climate justice and human rights for all people, especially the most marginalized. Additionally, an analysis of the figures including lawmakers, thought leaders, and other influencers who are elevated and supported by these institutions as leading figures and authorities on the issues of climate change and human rights has also become necessary to understand our collective failure to end the genocide in Palestine and a global ecocide both happening right before our very eyes.

As it pertains to the climate “movement,” we continue to witness a series of unforced errors and its willingness to align with forces – political, social, and otherwise – that have no intention of advancing necessary initiatives to reduce emissions and pollution, transform the entire economic system, or offer protection and recompense for the most vulnerable including Black, Brown, Indigenous and poor communities. In short, the climate “movement” has never viewed itself or its activities as firmly rooted in a concept of people(s) centered human rights. This explains the relative silence of the climate “movement” on the issue of genocide in Palestine – a silence that grew louder as we approached the 2024 election season, and one that rivals the sound of a pin drop since due to fears of being defunded or otherwise labeled as “antisemitic” by the Zionist industrial complex and its acolytes in government, something that has already occurred.

The refusal of the larger climate “movement” to take a firm, principled, and consistent stance on ending the genocide and illegal occupation of Palestine is firmly rooted in its refusal to name imperialism, colonization, and militarism as driving forces of the climate crisis. And these refusals limit the effectiveness of the climate “movement” to secure a just transition from extractive economies that view the planet as a commodity and loss of life as collateral damage and necessary sacrifices. As Max Ajl notes in his book *A People's Green New Deal*, “At least three elements of the national question are central to just transition. First, the push to have the concepts of climate and ecological debt taken seriously. Second, movements in favor of demilitarization and the construction of a peacetime economy in the metropolitan core. Third, struggles against settler colonization, which are connected to attempts to reinvigorate sovereignty and safeguard our common home: the world and the global environment.” As the larger climate “movement” continues its failure to embrace these elements, we should not expect it to be a driving global force calling for the end of genocide, which in turn demonstrates why we cannot rely on it to be driving force to end ecocide.

Yet the major question confronting the climate “movement” is one that it can't answer honestly – can we adequately address and dismantle the climate crisis in a system of capitalism? Far too many

climate organizations and their think tanks believe it's possible to achieve climate justice while maintaining capitalism, and this is demonstrated in the larger climate "movement's" support for a social democracy version of the Green New Deal rather than one that is rooted in the tenets of ecosocialism. In fact, even climate organizations who supported/support the candidacies of Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez would never refer to themselves as socialist organizations. Instead, far too many of these groups operate within an ultimate contradiction that would have you believe that capitalism simply needs to be tinkered with and reformed to serve the masses equally and humanely. The fact that the larger climate "movement" and far too other entities refuse to let go of capitalism explains why we do not see a concerted radical response to the climate crisis even as it's now taking the lives of affluent white folk – even they, albeit in smaller numbers than Black, Brown, Indigenous, and poor folk, have now become expendable as a function of preserving capitalism.

But as Ajl points out, the differences between a Green New Deal that derives from social democracy or diet capitalism and ecosocialism matter saliently because, "They have to do with whether the GND will be a vehicle for green social democracy in the United States, alongside superficial and largely tokenistic forms of anti-racism and "decolonization," or whether it will instead belong to a broader anti-imperialist program, involving the decolonization of settler-states in the Western hemisphere and elsewhere, alongside opposition to imperialism and the Pentagon system." A climate "movement" that is not anti-capitalist cannot be anti-imperialist. And institutions can't be anti imperialist if they do not hold anti militarist values that would compel them to be leading voices in calling for an end to the genocide and illegal occupation of Palestine.

No one can or should take the climate "movement" seriously when it purports to work to prevent ecocide when it won't do all that is necessary to end genocide.

Regarding the international human rights network, that has also offered perfunctory resistance to the genocide in Gaza, we see many of the same issues that plague the climate "movement." As the North-South Project for People(s)-Centered Human Rights ("The North-South Project") notes, "People(s)-Centered Human Rights (PCHR) are those non-oppressive rights that reflect the highest commitment to universal human dignity and social justice that individuals and collectives define and secure for themselves and Collective Humanity through social struggle." A commitment to universal human dignity necessitates viewing the climate crisis as a major obstacle and threat to securing and maintaining human rights. However, the capture of the international human rights network by neoliberal forces and corporate interests, much like the climate "movement," prevents it from being a reliable force for human rights through principled struggle. The North-South Project contends that this in itself threatens not just the effectiveness of the international human rights network, but also its standing as a legitimate entity, and calls for, "an alternative human rights frame that is liberated from the liberal, individual, legalistic, and state-centered apparatus that emerged at the conclusion of World War II as a "Western" human rights regime that became, and continues to be, a conservative weapon for enforcing the geopolitical interests of Western imperialism."

This alternative is more necessary than ever to confront and dismantle the interlinked crises of genocide and ecocide. Moreover, an alternative to the current international human rights network is also necessary if it is to remain credible. In his book, *Moral Abdication: On Consent to the Obliteration of Gaza*, Didier Fassin states, "Acquiescence to the war in Gaza and its tragic consequences has, for the foreseeable future, rendered any invocation of human rights, humanitarian reason and international law by those who have participated in this moral abdication

illegitimate and inoperative – even if it must be acknowledged that their double standards in many areas, including in their own countries, has long led them to lose credibility on this score.”

The international human rights network also lacks credibility on the issue of climate change. This is not to say that the network has not named that addressing the climate crisis is a critical component of human rights, yet it's rare to see human rights groups targeting fossil fuel cartels and other polluters or calling for them to be prosecuted for violations of international laws that are supposed to uphold human rights. This despite the fact that global south nations like Chile and Colombia have requested the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to clarify its obligations under the frame of international human rights law with regard to the climate crisis. Moreover, global south nations including Vanuatu, Antigua and Barbuda, Sierra Leone, Angola, and Vietnam have requested both the International Tribunal of the Sea and the International Court of Justice to elucidate the obligations of nation states to ensure the protection of the climate system for present and future generations through climate action. Both of these initiatives have been initiated without concerted support from the international human rights network. And like the climate “movement,” we have not observed the international human rights network embrace a socialist lens nor collectively call for an end to capitalism which is a driving force denying and resisting PCHR.

The climate “movement” and international human rights network will never address ecocide or genocide at scale until they become fully independent institutions that aren't beholden to any political party, especially the Democrat party, or a philanthropic regime that will never allow for any organization it funds to advance an anti-capitalist agenda. Neoliberal political parties and pro capitalism philanthropists enjoin the climate “movement” from naming and dismantling the root causes of climate change – white “supremacy” ideology, patriarchy, and colonization (which is to say racial capitalism) in the same way they enjoin liberal human rights networks from naming and dismantling the root causes of the livestreamed genocide we are witnessing in Palestine – zionism, western imperialism, and colonialism.

This, in turn, results in far too many Institutions that make up the climate “movement” and the international human rights network fostering a culture of rationalization that permits the calamities of genocide and ecocide, as well an acceptance of the forces and actors driving both. And worse yet, these institutions also conjure a culture of illusion by making people believe they are doing all in their power to dismantle genocidal war machines and fossil fuel cartels alike by clicking on a link to sign a petition or attending a one off rally bereft of concrete demands or an organizing methodology to advance these demands. All this is done to maintain the status quo of capitalism and white “supremacy” under the guise of “resistance.” The proof of this guise can be found in the fact that much like the climate “movement” refuses to stipulate that their political/organizing support for any candidate or lawmaker is contingent on denying blood money from, or association with AIPAC, the human rights network refuses to stipulate that their political/organizing support is contingent on supporting comeuppance for perpetual human rights violations committed by fossil fuel cartel corporations.

But institutions are only as legitimate as the people allow them to be. Ergo, the people have an incontrovertible responsibility to dismantle and delegitimize ineffective and/or morally compromised, unprincipled institutions if they we ever to collectively be even proximate to being in a position to dismantle and delegitimize systems of oppression that are catalyzing ecocide and genocide.

And If we the people don't force these institutions and the lawmakers they support to center the climate crisis as a crisis of human rights, we will continue to deny the human rights, and the very humanity, of the Palestinian people, which will amount to a death sentence for hundreds, thousands, and, in the very near future, millions.

No Compromise

No Retreat

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