



## **CLIMATE JUSTICE AND MIGRATION**

**What we see:** Of all the threats that face the United States and the global community, climate change shows the greatest potential to fundamentally alter the balance of the world we live in and the lives we choose to live. Those who live in the global south stand to lose much from the growing specter of climate change: millions will be forced out of their homes, away from their fields, and into new lands. The phenomenon of climate change-induced migration is one that could very well change the fabric of global society.

- According to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, it is possible that the number of climate change refugees and migrants could reach between 25 million and one billion by the year 2050.
- Climate change migration will be a burden placed disproportionately upon poor, rural, and coastal communities as rising sea levels, increased desertification, flooding, and the loss of natural wildlife and plant species will force many to leave their homes in order to support themselves.
  - One fifth of the of the world's population lives in coastal areas in China, India, the Caribbean, and Central America that are vulnerable to rising tides and climate change-related storms (*The Guardian*).
  - Crop yields from rain-fed crops could decrease by more than 50% in some areas of Africa (IPCC).
- We may already be witnessing the start of climate change migration: in Dhaka, Bangladesh a full 70% of residents compelled to dwell in urban slum areas are estimated to have migrated to the city due to environmental hardships (*Scientific American*).

**What our faith tells us:** We are guided by the belief that we must protect both the world we

live in and all of those who call it home. As the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have recognized, “all peoples have the right to conditions worthy of human life and, if these conditions are not present, the right to migrate.”

We also recognize the need to be good caretakers of the environment. We must do all we can to protect God's creation before it is too late. As Pope Benedict XVI declares in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, “The world is not something indifferent, raw material to be utilized simply as we see fit.” Instead, we must all protect the earth, skies, rivers, and valleys we have been given. We must defend our planet from the ill effects of climate change that threaten to displace millions of our fellow human beings.

**What we hope for:** We advocate that the United States take a leading role in recognizing the needs of climate migrants.

**Legislation:** We call on Congress to endorse the following:

- Generous humanitarian assistance to climate migrants.
- A new entry mechanism for climate migrants, similar to the special immigrant visa process.
- Advocacy of the international community to recognize climate migrants, either as refugees or with their own legally protected and defined status.
- Investment in research drawing the link between environmentally degrading practices, climate change, and migration.



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