



American
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CLIMATE JUSTICE REPORT (2020–2030)



Climate change is not an abstract threat. It is right here, right now—truly impossible to ignore. As I write this letter from my home in Los Angeles, the area is still in a long recovery process from the severe wildfires that tore through communities in early 2025. Powerful winds and unusually dry conditions caused the wildfires to spread quickly. Thousands of people lost their homes, students were unsure where they would attend school, and businesses, small and large, shuttered. More than 16,000 structures were destroyed or damaged, including nearly half of all Black homes in the Altadena area.

Wildfires are just one of many problems caused by climate change. Long-term shifts in both temperature and weather patterns also result in intense droughts, water scarcity, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms, and declining biodiversity. As temperatures rise—each of the past ten years has been alarmingly hot, with 2024 the warmest year on record—we can safely assume that things will further deteriorate.

Inequality drives the climate crisis, and the statistics are truly staggering. For example, the world's richest 1% have produced as much carbon pollution as the poorest two-thirds of the global population. Rich industrialized countries are responsible for more than one-third of climate emissions, while Africa produces less than 4% of the global total.

It is also true that while the economically poorest countries and people make the fewest contributions to climate change, limited resources ensure that they are the most impacted by it. For example, 2.5 billion people work as smallholder farmers and herders and in fisheries. Their livelihoods—and ability to feed their families—are completely dependent on climate, predictable weather patterns, and healthy ecosystems. Stated simply: When floods destroy crops, they also destroy farmers. In addition to thrusting people into poverty, climate change also pushes people from their homes and off their land, forcing them to seek safety from dangerous or highly volatile conditions. Studies indicate that natural disasters and climate change will displace 1.2 billion people by 2050.

There must be another way to inhabit this Earth. Another way to ensure that it is properly cared for so that it can carry and support all people, regardless of their gender, race, religion, or economic class.

At AFSC we are committed to climate justice, which is centered on the idea that climate change disproportionately impacts vulnerable people and populations. Wealthy countries, militaries, corporations, and individuals have profited from high carbon emissions and overconsumption of the earth's resources, and we urge these actors to accept responsibility for their actions. This must be the first step in ensuring an equitable future for everyone.

We are also supporting our grassroots partners. These organizations are leading changes and working for justice across geographies, from New Mexico to Kenya to Guatemala to Jordan. Whether they

focus on solidifying community water rights, ensuring that climate migrants are treated with dignity, or helping farmers achieve food sovereignty, their work promotes community participation and emphasizes that traditional and local knowledge is key to climate change mitigation efforts; it is gaining momentum and more important than ever.

Our continuing partnerships through the Quaker United Nations Office build important alliances, highlight the urgency of the climate crisis, and accelerate impact for the most marginalized populations. And we are forming new partnerships with other Quaker organizations, such as Earth Quaker Action Team and Quaker Earthcare Witness, in global campaigns related to fossil fuel production and investments.

This publication provides an overview of this work. We hope it will inspire and remind you that together we can build a more resilient future—one that is rooted in justice and that works for everyone.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sonia Tuma'.

Sonia Tuma



PROGRAM GOAL:

Global South countries and historically marginalized populations—including women; youth; low-income, Indigenous, and land-based communities; and people of color in industrialized nations—are disproportionately affected by climate change and environmental degradation. AFSC views climate justice as integral to and inseparable from efforts to foster just and sustainable peace, build just responses to forced displacement and migration, and create just economies.

Because climate change drives socioeconomic disruption, displacement, and conflict, our current strategic plan (2020–2030) compels us to support the climate justice agenda and bolster affected communities in building resilience and promoting sustainability.

“The ways that we grow and distribute our food affect all of us. Everyone deserves to be free from hunger, and sustainable farming is key for accomplishing this goal while also protecting our environment. We need policies that will move us away from a destructive food system that benefits the few, and toward a regenerative system that meets human needs and preserves the health of our planet. To do this, we must make it clear to Congress that we need a just farm bill for all.”

—Brett Heinz, AFSC Global Policy Coordinator for Economic and Climate Justice

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES:

AFSC supports communities responding to and working toward climate and environmental justice in the United States and across the Global South with projects, programs, and policy work. Examples of our work include:



- ✓ Responding to climate emergencies—Tropical Storm Julia in El Salvador, Hurricanes Ida in New Orleans and Eta and Iota in Guatemala, tropical storms in Mexico, and Tropical Cyclone Seroja in Indonesia—with humanitarian assistance.
- ✓ Ensuring that farmers and farms are part of the just transition to a clean, renewable energy economy through the U.S. Farm Bill.
- ✓ Convening climate justice activists, civil society organizations, researchers, and community-led groups at dialogue exchange programs designed to build a strong climate justice movement, foster collaborative advocacy efforts, and engage in quiet diplomacy.
- ✓ Supporting New Mexico’s small-scale farmers with shade cloth, solar panels, and soil-enhancing composting systems that boost resilience to extreme weather.
- ✓ Partnering with Cambodia’s Ministry of Environment and promoting sustainable development projects.
- ✓ Advocating for access to safe drinking water alongside the Passamaquoddy Tribe in Maine and in Georgia’s DeKalb County.
- ✓ Training Indigenous Ixil Maya and rural farmers of Sonsonate and Morazán communities in ancestral farming methods that protect land, rivers, and food systems.
- ✓ Advocating for settled communities in Guatemala’s protected natural areas to have an enhanced role in environmental conservation efforts and prioritizing their local sustainable development proposals.

Understanding How the Climate Crisis Fuels Forced Migration in the Horn of Africa

In 2011 El Niño, plus unusually high temperatures, produced a devastating drought that swept across East Africa and the Horn of Africa. For 18 months, 13 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and South Sudan were in acute crisis—without adequate food and water and in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Seven-year-old Anisoa Ahmed was one of them. Her village in Somalia’s Gedo region was ravaged by the drought, which was said to be the worst in decades. The family’s animals died. So did friends, neighbors, and relatives. Anisoa and seven surviving family members made the difficult decision to leave home, trekking more than 500 miles under a scorching sun to reach the Dadaab refugee complex in Kenya. The family lived in a temporary shelter, subsisting on minimal provisions and dreaming of home. It would take six years for them to return.

Since 2010 the Horn of Africa has endured recurrent cycles of intense flooding and devastating drought. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 4.5 million people in four countries—Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan—were displaced by climate-related disasters in 2023.

Climate change intensifies inequality. It compounds issues that prevent peace—war, gender disparities, and human rights violations—and produces additional challenges. It disrupts livelihoods. It exacerbates food insecurity and shortages. It causes indefinite school closures. And it creates conflict among communities competing for scarce resources. Women, children, and the elderly often experience these impacts most severely.

AFSC is committed to documenting how climate change forces migration and affects specific populations. We also leverage evidence-based advocacy to influence policy—local, regional, national, and global—that can mitigate its effects and benefit the populations that are most devastated by it.

In 2021 we established the Salama Hub, which commissions African researchers to gather evidence and perspectives on the climate crisis and other disasters that drive and perpetuate conflict. Working in partnership with Misereor, the German Catholic Bishops’ Organization for Development Cooperation, we monitor cross-border



migration to understand why people move and what they need during their journeys. Because there is significant movement from Somalia to Kenya (and back to Somalia)—and because there are so many stories like Anisoa’s—we have a particular focus on this route.

Our work helps ensure that migrants know their rights and responsibilities. For example, some migrants face arrest because they do not have government permission to be in Kenya or because they leave areas designated for refugees. When this occurs, AFSC and partners offer pro bono legal representation and refer cases to organizations that focus on refugee rights. Within camps like those at Dadaab, which house approximately 300,000 refugees each year, our focus is on healing trauma and making sure that refugees can process and begin to recover from being forced from their homes.

Creating a Consortium and Fostering Exchange in the Middle East



Home to half a billion people, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has been hot and dry for thousands of years. Today climate change is exacerbating these conditions, creating unprecedented water scarcities and droughts, dangerously high temperatures, and rising sea levels. Sixteen of the 25 most water-stressed countries are in the region, which contributes less than 5% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions but is among the most climate vulnerable.

When AFSC began creating its most recent strategic plan, climate justice quickly emerged as a pressing challenge that intersects with all our efforts to build a just world. The issue was particularly resonant with the AFSC team in the Middle East, which committed to building its knowledge base, understanding needs and challenges, and determining how to create an approach that directly benefits migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable populations.

AFSC has been convening climate and environmental experts—activists, academics, government officials, and civil society organizations—from Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Morocco. As part of this initiative, which provides safe spaces for people to share knowledge and experiences and learn from one another, the Amman gathering served as a launchpad for additional climate and environmental justice work in the region. For example, AFSC’s Middle East Office recently hosted a Climate Justice Consortium made up of nine members. The consortium works to achieve climate justice through locally led movements by building proposals for advocacy research, planning webinars to share information, and strategizing ways to engage in critical policymaking. There is also a focus on building approaches that are centered on the Arabic language.

The staff in Jordan are also meeting with and developing important relationships with members of the Jordanian parliament, exploring opportunities for collaboration, fostering trust, and emphasizing that a national climate plan must engage and elevate the voices of diverse civil society stakeholders, including students, universities, and research organizations.



Amplifying Community Voices for Climate Justice in Guatemala and El Salvador

AFSC has been present in Central America since 1927. Our initial focus was on encouraging the United States to cease supporting dictatorships. Today we work with partners to support the rights of Indigenous peoples and land-based communities, provide humanitarian aid during socio-environmental crises, and address forced migration. In Guatemala and El Salvador, we champion climate justice by documenting violence against environmental defenders, providing these leaders with tools to protect themselves and forming critical alliances among community leaders, civil society organizations, and activists across Latin America.

In Guatemala, AFSC focuses on the Ixil and Petén regions, home to Indigenous Maya and multicultural communities working to preserve their rights, land, and traditions against formidable challenges. The Ixil region is rich in natural resources but threatened by hydroelectric dams, illegal logging, and deforestation. The Petén region includes the Maya Biosphere Reserve, which has the largest tropical forest north of the Amazon. Communities there are threatened by armed criminal groups engaged in trafficking,

land invasions, deforestation, and illegal livestock farming. The national conservation law in Guatemala poses problems in these areas—and across the country—limiting access to social and economic rights.

Further south, in El Salvador, AFSC is working with local communities countering corporate greed, including sugarcane companies stealing water. In the Sonsonate and Morazán departments, we support agroecological schools and political training spaces, strengthening women-led community initiatives and supporting leaders advocating for food sovereignty and access to land and water.

In both countries we are conducting robust research and compiling comprehensive case studies documenting the negative impact of extractive industries and agro-industrial and mega-tourism projects. AFSC and community leaders presented findings to the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing and at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the preeminent organization promoting and defending human



rights in the Americas. The IACHR has determined that land, territory, and environmental defenders in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras face some of the world's most dangerous conditions. Documenting these conditions is the first step to advocating for effecting positive change.

We are also tackling urgent regional issues by strengthening collaboration among diverse stakeholders—civil society, academia, affected communities, social movements, and human rights institutions—in Mexico, Central America, Colombia, and Brazil. This work amplifies marginalized voices and has resulted in the IACHR adopting the 2024 Resolution on Human Mobility Induced by Climate Change, which guides states on how to uphold human rights in the context of climate-induced displacement.

The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)



Quakers have advocated for sustainable peace and justice at the United Nations in New York and Geneva for more than 75 years. Since its establishment in 1948, the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) has been committed to speaking with integrity, uplifting the voices of historically marginalized communities, and fostering peaceful and just approaches to formidable global challenges.

Today climate change and environmental crises are top priorities for QUNO's Geneva office. Both threaten our ability to live sustainably and

justly on Earth. And both have root causes embedded in unsustainable and unjust energy, economic, and agriculture systems that prioritize unequal distribution of wealth over equality for all people.

While working to disrupt the systems that drive and enable climate change, QUNO advocates for a human rights-based approach to climate policy. This approach integrates biodiversity protection; gender, youth, and Indigenous peoples' rights; human rights; and meaningful participation in

decision-making. Its work—at the Human Rights Council, at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and with the diplomatic community in Geneva—is grounded in climate science findings from the IPCC.

QUNO Geneva is an independent Swiss charity. As a fellow Quaker organization, it engages with AFSC on technical expertise and international political advocacy. To learn more about QUNO Geneva, please see <https://quno.org/areas-of-work/geneva>

Advocating for a Fair Farm Bill

Nearly 100 years ago, the first U.S. Farm Bill was enacted in response to the twin crises of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s legislation focused on three goals: keeping food prices fair for farmers and consumers, ensuring the country’s food supply, and protecting vital natural resources. Today, as 47 million people in the U.S. experience food insecurity and extreme weather events threaten the global food supply and the planet’s fate, the bill remains as important as it was in the early 20th century.

The Farm Bill is usually passed every five years, but Congress hasn’t passed a new one since 2018, repeatedly extending the old version. When Congress authorizes the next bill, it will determine how nearly half a trillion dollars is spent. It will also decide whether to continue supporting large-scale, intensive industrial-style agriculture, which accounts for more than 10% of the country’s greenhouse gas emissions, or to shift that support toward better uses.

AFSC believes that the Farm Bill is long overdue for a major overhaul. It must address climate change by funding programs that support climate-friendly agricultural practices—everything from planting to packaging and delivery; investing in sustainable urban agriculture that connects communities to local food systems; supporting small-scale farmers so they can manage land without using damaging chemical fertilizers and fossil fuels; scaling efforts for regenerative agriculture; and creating larger, better conservation programs.

In partnership with grassroots organizations, we are advocating for these changes. At the federal level, we are meeting with congressional offices, urging members to create a more just Farm Bill. And we are galvanizing supporters to share their concerns, disseminating information in myriad articles, and issuing action alerts so others can have their voices heard and communicate directly with their elected representatives.



Fostering Collaboration, Not Competition, in New Mexico

El agua es la vida. In New Mexico’s desert terrain, water is everything. It is life. Traditional small-scale farmers know how to live off the land; grow diverse, nutritious crops; and feed their families. For hundreds of years they have depended on acequias—communal irrigation canals controlled by trusted, community-elected representatives—to equitably manage this precious resource. Today climate change threatens the existence of acequia communities.

Even as New Mexico, like much of the Southwest, faces unprecedented climate-induced drought, water consumption and demand for water have not slowed. Developers and

extractive industries are forging ahead with water-intensive plans to build sprawling subdivisions and increase oil, gas, and mining operations. AFSC is supporting local people who protect the water and use it to support an economy of life.

We have worked in New Mexico since 1974, and over the past 50 years, our mission—supporting the empowerment of land-based people in their work to protect land and water—has not changed. The communities we currently support need resources to adapt agricultural practices to the warmer and drier climate. They need support organizing to defend against attacks on water rights and water quality.

And they need opportunities to come together and speak to other farmers about insect infestations, crop failures, and techniques to adapt to a warming planet.

AFSC is on the ground in New Mexico, providing farmers with materials like shade cloth and demonstrating techniques to reduce water usage and provide UV protection. We advocate at local and state levels for wise and sustainable development. And we gather farmers, hosting convenings for them to share their knowledge about crops, offer strategies to build power, and come together as a community.



A HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CRISES

Global South countries make the fewest contributions to global greenhouse emissions but feel their effects most acutely. In the poorest countries and among the most marginalized populations, climate change is a cause and a consequence of inequality and one of the greatest obstacles to building a just world. It uproots families and forces entire communities to migrate. It disrupts the food supply. It drives malnutrition, infectious disease, and heat stress. It exacerbates mental health challenges. And it fuels famine.

We have seen its devastating impact around the world. Climate justice is the only long-term solution, but communities need immediate assistance, too. With support from donors, we have been able to provide food, clothing, and other essentials to people who have lost their homes, their land, and their livelihoods. We have been on the ground in El Salvador to respond to Tropical Storm Julia. After hurricanes Katrina and Ida in New Orleans and Eta and Iota in Guatemala. Following Tropical Cyclone Seroja in Indonesia and after catastrophic flooding in Burundi. And in Somalia in 2024, supporting climate migrants with vouchers for food and essential nonfood items.



“New Mexico’s water democracy teaches us about working together to steward our land and resources, especially in the face of climate change. The traditional acequia system ensures that everyone shares in the abundance when water is bountiful. We also share in scarcity, so no one bears the burden alone.”

—Sayrah Namaste, New Mexico Program Co-Director

CLIMATE EMERGENCY FUND: HOW YOU CAN HELP

Climate change creates countless emergencies and protracted crises that are often worse than scientists originally predicted. From the deadly wildfires in California to flooding and landslides in Southeast Asia to droughts and forced migration in Africa, a warming planet—2024 was the hottest year on record—has proven to be a dangerous one.

AFSC is positioned to help, and at the beginning of 2024, we launched our Climate Emergency Fund to provide generous donors with a way to support solutions.

“We are increasingly alarmed by climate change,” said Joyce Ajlouny, AFSC general secretary. “Every country is impacted, but systems of inequality ensure that the communities most affected by injustice are especially susceptible to its wrath. We have a moral obligation to fund reparations in places where people pay the price for a problem they did not create.”

In addition to helping directly impacted communities respond to and rebuild from crises, the fund focuses on advocacy, education, and organizing to create changes needed for a just, peaceful, and sustainable future.

To support the Climate Emergency Fund, visit:
<https://afsc.org/about-afscs-climate-emergency-fund>



“The discussions we have about our neighborhood composting, solar panel fields, healthy land use, and community land trusts help me to realize that the possibilities for what we can achieve for our community are endless.”

—Elizabeth Boone, participant in an AFSC-sponsored Community Kitchen event in New Orleans

“We are the resonance of the wounded Earth and of those displaced by injustice, who seek refuge in hope and in the pursuit of a Good Living. Let us close the gaps, resist unjust realities, and urgently build the bridges of transformation that we so desperately need.”

Final Declaration of the AFSC's 2023 Dialogue and Exchange Program on Climate and Migration Justice in Latin America



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Founded in 1917, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that promotes lasting peace with justice, as a practical expression of faith in action. Drawing on continuing spiritual insights and working with people of many backgrounds, we nurture the seeds of change and respect for human life that transform social relations and systems.

<https://afsc.org/about-afscs-climate-emergency-fund>