

Climate Justice

Pollution does not differentiate between borders or location; it is a global problem. Yet, the effects of climate change have greater impacts on countries in the Global South and especially on Indigenous Peoples, small farming-based communities and women around the globe. However, the wealthiest countries in the world, in particular their corporate and political elites, are those most responsible for the climate crises.

Climate justice movements are diverse, but a fundamental principle lies at the heart: the recognition that the threats posed by climate change are a consequence of unequal economic and social power relations.

In this regard, climate justice movements are struggling for territories, forests, water, cultures, food sovereignty, collective rights, gender equalities, free movement for people, self-determination, among many others. Struggles that place “justice” at the center, supporting real, community-led solutions to the climate crises which are found in the practices and knowledge of those who have always protected and fought for defending their environments and livelihoods.

By looking at the economic and political processes of the world system that are causing the climate disruption, climate justice movements mainly seek to stop resource-intensive industrial production, to “leave fossil-fuels in the ground, coal in the hole and the tar sands in the lands”, and to bring to a halt the market mantra of constant accumulation and enclosures which bring huge inequalities and injustices to the peoples of the world.

When looking inside the climate debates, grassroots-based climate justice movements aim to prevent empty discourses based on carbon abstractions and calculations that are detached from reality. So-called “technology fixes” are unproven experiments that allow polluters to continue business as usual and delay any real change. The same applies to the market-based climate “solutions” being promoted by the UN, the World Bank, corporate lobbies, mainstream conservation NGOs, and many governments, which exacerbate local environmental and social conflicts.

Every time we hear about a “climate solution”, we need to ask ourselves the following questions; Who is benefiting and who is being damaged? How can this affect the local environment and communities on the ground? Where does climate justice play a role?

An important element of climate justice is to ensure that the “solutions” do not compound other existing inequalities, for example by encouraging land appropriation (in the case of agrofuels, large dams and forestry policies), or do not use climate change to re-legitimize unfair practices in other policy domains (as in the case of certain security and migration policies).

