



Climate Changes Impact on Human Rights System in Egypt

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Report

The Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue



Introduction

The Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue issues its first report about climate changes' impact on human rights system in Egypt. The report monitors human rights condition from environmental changes perspective as climate and environmental changes affect number of fundamental human rights.

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Generally speaking, climate changes began to affect people's lives on earth. These climate changes are noticeable in temperatures rise to standard levels, rise in oceans' and seas' levels in a way which threatens dry and green land in addition to great spread of viral diseases and their transmission all over the world. The latest of such diseases is COVID-19 which started in Wuhan city in China and has been transmitted to number of countries all over the world. The studies on the diseases point out that it is a new mutation of a virus that infects the human respiratory system and in case of its transmission to respiratory patients then it is fatal when there is no medicines or plasmas which treat the virus because of its new and first appearance and still no one recognizes which animal transmits the disease to humans.

Hence, climate and environmental changes along with spread of diseases clearly affect group of basic human rights which are:

1- Right to Life:

Right to life is one of the basic and fundamental human rights but climate change threatens lives of billions of people on earth.

2- Right to Health:

The international human rights conventions and charters guarantee the right to access the highest levels of mental and physical health. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the main health impacts of climate change will include the increased danger of infection and disease in addition to death cases due to hot waves and more severe fires, increasing danger of food shortage because of lack of food production in poor regions and increasing dangers of diseases transmitted by food, water and insects.

3- Right to housing

The right to suitable standard of living is a human right guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights including right to suitable housing. But climate change threatens our right to housing in different ways as the phenomenon of extreme weather such as floods and great fires actually destroy houses and result in displacement of people.



In addition, drought, erosion and floods may lead to environmental change with time. The rise of seas level also threatens the houses of millions of people who live in low areas all over the world.

4- Right to Water and Sanitation

Right to fresh water for personal and house use in addition to right to sanitation are fundamental human rights which guarantee good health. There are various factors which demonstrate that climate changes have been affected the quality and quantity of water resources such as ice and snow melting, high temperatures, high levels of seas. Actually, there are more than one billion people who do not get clean water. So climate changes will get the situation worse.

International Conventions of Climate

The United Nations have started their interest and concern with environment issue by holding their first conference in Stockholm in Sweden in the period from 5th to 16th June 1972. Then this concern with environment issues was developed by adopting the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992 during the conference of Rio de Janeiro Summit. This convention entered into force in 1994 and ratified by 196 state parties (195 countries and the European Union which makes it an international convention). The goal of such convention is to stabilize human-made gas emissions to the atmosphere upon a level which prevents any serious human intervention or influence on climate system. The Conference of Parties 19 (COP 19) was held in November 2013 in Warsaw and achieved advancement in supporting the most vulnerable and the weakest countries as the conference concluded an agreement to provide fund to combat climate change.

The United Nations Council for Human Rights shed light on the importance of addressing human rights within the discussions related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Plan 2030. The Council for Human Rights has repeatedly shown the results on its discussions, studies and activities in its sessions. In addition, the final document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development 2015 entitled “The Future they Want” assures again the important of human rights to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, one of the most important steps is Geneva commitment regarding human rights in procedures related to climate. It was a voluntary initiative led by Costa Rica and was initially supported by 18 countries. In this



commitment (which is still open), the countries commit to facilitate sharing of the best practices and experiences among human rights and climate experts on national level.

According to the Council for Human Rights, it is very important to adopt human rights-based approach to guide the international policies and measures aim at combating and confronting climate change. The basic characteristics of human rights-based approach are as following:

Upon formulating policies and programs, it is necessary to apply human rights as a main goal.

It is important to define rights holders and official bodies which bear the duties to apply such rights in addition to defining the commitments of these bodies to enhance the capacities of rights holders. In addition, the principles and standards derived from the International Human Rights Law (especially the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and the main international human rights conventions and treaties) should guide all policies all over such process.

Moreover, the Universal Declaration for Human Rights along with Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, the Declaration on the Right to Development, Sustainable Development Plan 2030, UN understanding of human rights –based approach and other international declarations and instruments stress that human rights principles such as universality, inalienability, indivisibility, integration, non-discrimination, equality, participation, accountability and rule of law should guide the development.

Human rights obligations apply on the goals and commitments of states in regard to climate change and require that measures related to climate should focus on protecting the rights of the most vulnerable people in case of climate change. These present commitments require international cooperation including financial and technological support in addition to capacity building support to achieve low-carbon, climate-adaptable and sustainable development along with reducing gas emissions immediately at the same time. Also states cannot strengthen sustainability and guarantee accountability of all bodies unless by integrating human rights in measures and policies related to climate and enabling people to participate in making policies.

Combating Climate Changes within Sustainable Development Goals

In 2000, the whole world agreed on setting number of Sustainable Development Goals which also known as the Global Goals or the Millennium Goals; they are an international



call to work upon combating poverty, protecting Earth and guaranteeing that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

These seventeen goals based on accomplished successes in achieving Developmental Millennium Goals (2000 – 2015) which also include new fields such as climate change, economic inequality, strengthening innovation, sustainable consumption, peace, justice along with other priorities. So still the Sustainable Development Goals represent comprehensive agenda which treat root causes of poverty in addition to unite in order to occur achieve positive change for the Earth and people.

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Climate Change... An International Human Rights Disaster

The negative impacts caused by climate change are international and contemporary and subject to increase dramatically depending on climate change level that occurs ultimately. Hence, climate change must be faced on an international human rights-based confrontation. So the main messages of High Commissioner for Human Rights in the period before holding the 21st session of Parties Conference came to shed light on the basic commitments and obligations of states and other bodies represented in the following axes:

- 1- International cooperation.*
- 2- Guaranteeing justice in measures related to climate.*
- 3- Guaranteeing that all people enjoy the benefits of science and its applications.*
- 4- Protecting human rights against commercial business harms.*
- 5- Guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination.*
- 6- Guaranteeing meaningful participation.*

Health Harms of Climate Change

World Health Organization has revealed that climate change causes harms to human health while many people are suffering from heat stress, severe weather conditions and mosquito-transmitted diseases including malaria.

The infectious diseases are considered the most negative impacts that threaten the safety of patients all over the world in general and in the Middle East in particular. Also these diseases are highly affected by environmental changes and transmitted diseases from animal to human. According to the report of WHO, about 5% to 15% of patients who were in intensive care hospitals caught infectious diseases related to health care at any time and that the danger of infection is 2 to 20 times higher in developing countries.



Although high ratio of infectious diseases and morality caused by infectious diseases related to health care is preventable and although low-cost interventions to prevent infection are provided, yet the progress achieved in such field is still slow because of many aspects:

- *Poor level of commitment by workers in health care field in regard to standard practices of infection combatting.*
- *Dangerous behavior practices by patients and visitors in places of providing health care.*
- *Poor understanding and implementation of infection prevention and combatting programs in the field of health care.*
- *The program (if any) is not linked with other services and interventions of public health.*

The Impact of Climate Change Danger on Egypt

Egypt is one of the most vulnerable countries to dangers resulted from climate changes, although it is one of the least countries all over the world which contribute to emission of global warming gases with a ratio of 0.6% of the total emission all over the world. This is according to the data mentioned in the last report of Egypt about the size of global warming emission gases which comes within Egypt's implementation of UN Framework Convention on Climate Changes that was ratified by Egypt in 1994 along with Kyoto Protocol which Egypt ratified in 2005. The climate changes in Egypt directly threaten food security because of plants death, water lack and epidemics.

In addition, Egypt has started procedures of cleansing Egypt's north lakes after that the opening of areas planted with greenhouses to provide health and safe food for Egyptians. This is in addition to the projects of turning cars from regular fuels to natural gas and the initiative of 'A Bike for every Citizen' which base on the strategy of replace cars and other polluting transportation means with other environmentally friendly transportation means which also improve public health.

Egypt also joined Metz Charter to maintain biodiversity. Besides, Egypt has launched an initiative to enhance 'harmony' among the conventions of Rio de Janeiro regarding climate change, desertification and biodiversity in addition to finding a complete approach to deal with loss of biodiversity, negative impacts of climate change and lands deterioration. Moreover, Egypt and African union countries are involving in combating plastic remnants in oceans and setting national and international legislations to enhance



the confrontation along with calling the world in cooperation with Africa to provide necessary technologies to deal with non-biodegradable remnants such as plastic.

This comprehensive approach provided by Egypt on local and international level points out that Egypt seriously deals with environmental issue and combating climate changes and is ready to cooperate with UN mechanisms to stop the danger of aggravating the climate crisis.

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Recommendations

- 1- The developments of COVID-19 transmission from China to other countries all over the world suppose that WHO will issue a global alert against the disease and what it requires from special measures to reduce its transmission among people along with intensifying international cooperation to find anti-plasma as soon as possible.*
- 2- Putting an urgent plan to confront the transmission of infectious diseases and launching awareness campaign to eliminate bad customs which help in spreading these diseases and raise awareness regarding the necessity of committing to hygiene rules.*
- 3- All countries should cooperate to reduce the emissions of gases cause global warming to zero by 2050. The richer countries should do that faster. By 2030, the ratio of gas emissions all over the world must be half the ratio in 2010.*
- 4- Rich countries should help poor countries in confronting harms and dangers of climate changes because of its high cost.*
- 5- Expanding health care programs for individuals to protect them against impacts of climate changes on public health and be prepared to confront high temperatures and their impact on human.*
- 6- Searching agricultural crops that can adapt with high temperatures in Egypt.*
- 7- Continuing efforts of combating rise of seas levels and protecting coastal cities.*
- 8- Ethiopia should review its situation in regard to Al Nahda Dam and cooperate with Egypt to confront the dangers during the period of filling in the tank and the effects in case of the Nile exposed to drought the matter which will affect Egypt's water portion and expose Egyptian population to the risk of thirsty.*