

COP27: GLOBAL SOUTH DEMANDS CLIMATE CHANGE REPARATIONS

ACHRS STATEMENT | CASSANDRA BACKX



The reporting on COP27 has been largely sidetracked by the crackdown on civil activism and the human rights violations of its host country, Egypt. The case of Alaa Abdel Fattah, in particular, has garnered special interest. The civil activist who rose to prominence during the 2011 Arab Spring went on a hunger strike and even briefly stopped drinking water at the start of COP27 in protest of his unlawful detention.

But what has actually been discussed at COP27, and what are the outcomes of this climate change summit?

Climate change reparations

One of the major talking points of COP27 was the issue of reparations. Nations in the Global South, in particular Africa and South-East Asia, are asking for financial aid, or reparations, from the West. African and Asian nations are the least responsible for climate change, brought on for the most part by the West, yet they are suffering the most. Europe and North America share responsibility for mitigating the impact of pollution and global warming on vulnerable communities as part of their commitment to human rights.

Pakistan, for example, has demanded that major polluters pay loss and damage for the climate change-induced floods that devastated the nation last summer. A number of Western nations, such as Germany and Canada, have since pledged funds to compensate for their disproportionately large emissions.

However, the compensation for loss and damage pledged by the EU, roughly 1 billion USD, does not reflect the damages European countries indirectly caused through climate change. The cost of these damages amounts to much more than 1 billion USD. But Europe remains rather unwilling to pledge much more, preferring



instead to explore other options to help mitigate the impact of climate change in the hardest-hit regions.

However, providing financial aid to communities on the frontline of global warming is merely a short-term solution to manage this existential threat. More extensive and long-term solutions are needed to successfully challenge climate change and secure people's right to life and health. Accountability from the world's largest polluters, in particular the fossil fuel industry and the (US) military, remains an unfulfilled popular demand.

Big oil keeps profiting

Additionally, the presence of Gulf petrostates at the climate summit highlighted the double standards of the West. Western nations have been advocating for reducing fossil fuels, yet they keep encouraging the Gulf nations to produce more oil.

Leaders of nations in the Global South called out big oil for continuing to make a profit off of polluting the planet.

"It is about time that these companies are made to pay a global carbon tax on their profits as a source of funding for loss and damage," said Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua.

"While they are profiting, the planet is burning."

No environmental justice without human rights

Egypt's President Sisi raised concern over the worsening climatic events in the MENA region, where increasing forest fires, floods and torrential rains have caused major financial losses.

However, the Egyptian regime maintains a heavily repressive social climate allowing virtually no space for civil and environmental activism, which is worrisome given the growing discourse.

Egyptian human right lawyer Yasmin Omar is concerned that there will be a huge crackdown on activists who were involved in COP27 after it ends. She is convinced that there is a clear correlation between allowing space for civic discourse and implementing successful environmental action.

"Addressing the environmental issue requires a holistic approach that puts human rights in the middle of every conversation, and we should send the message that there isn't environmental justice without human rights," says Yasmin, "There isn't environmental justice without free civic space."

Potential of COP27 unfulfilled

COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh was dubbed the implementation COP following the many pledges that were made at COP26 in Glasgow last year. However, COP27 has not actually provided many concrete plans for implementing climate action. The commitment to loss and damage reparations is the climate summit's sole accomplishment.

Vice President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, expressed disappointment in the limited outcome. He is still advocating for extensive emission cuts from the largest emitters. Ultimately, major emitters will have to start paying loss and damage reparations, but the underlying mechanisms causing climate change remain unaddressed.

ACHRS applauds the initiative to take action against climate change and honour the human right to life and health; however, the outcomes of COP27 are mostly unsatisfactory and insufficient.

ACHRS also strongly condemns Egypt's repressive measures and the regime's crackdown on civil and environmental activism. ACHRS demands the release of Egypt's political prisoners and that the right to freedom of speech of Egyptian activists is respected. Our organisation recognizes the importance and the necessity of allowing civil activism and free speech in order to enact climate action.

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