

Climate refugees

What do these two photos have in common? {3, 2, 1...}

[Left: boat refugees. Right: Polar bear on (melting) ice floe.]

More than you might think.

Do you know the word climate refugee?

- John Kerry: "Climate Refugee" -

Of course.

This (← left) was caused by war and violence. And this (right →) was caused by global warming. Climate change can chase large groups of people out of their homes, just like bombs and brute dictators. But we had some great beach days here last summer, didn't we? Spanish weather, here. 2016 is even on its way to becoming the hottest year ever. And the previous record? That was 2015.

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Peter Kuipers Munneke: "Worse still, nine out of the ten hottest years ever measured came after the year 2000."

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Things are still getting worse.

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Peter Kuipers Munneke: "Especially when the permafrost in Russia and Canada starts defrosting and all the hidden methane is released, which enhances global warming even further than the rising CO2 levels."

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And here's another popular climate song. Sea levels are rising, extreme weather occurs more often, floods and drought. Unlike the weather, climate is not a popular topic of conversation. Too much hassle.

President Obama: "We see sea levels rising further. Longer and hotter heat waves. Dangerous droughts and floods."

More and more problems are piling on top of each other.

The UN expects that 50 to 200 million people will have fled their homes for climate-related reasons by the year 2050. That's about the population from South Africa to Brazil. Fleeing. Without even an official refugee status, because climate is not on the list (race, religion, nationality, social group, political beliefs). But climate refugees already exist.

Drought in the Gobi desert is forcing Chinese farmers into the city.

Hurricane Katrina chased away half the population of New Orleans.

Rising sea levels is hunting hundreds of thousands of people in Bangladesh.

These are only a few examples.

But these direct consequences of climate change are not even the worst problem. This report made for the G7 (A New Climate for Peace – Taking Action and Climate and Fragility Risks) warns that climate change is a 'threat multiplier'. This means that countries which are already vulnerable and unstable will become even more so due to climate change. This process is already in progress.

Look at the Middle East. For example, worldwide drought in 2010 made bread almost impossible to afford in Egypt.

From rap: "Bread! Freedom! Social equality! Bread!"

In Syria, over a million farmers left the country and went to the city, which caused overpopulation and more tension. If climate change continues threatening these regions, where will the refugees go?

John Kerry: "Do you think migration is causing problems and extremism in Europe now? Just wait until shortages in food and water develop."

Of course, there are a lot of contributing factors. And the numbers are (- ding!)

But climate scientists, the G7, and the UN are deeply concerned.

President Obama: "More migration. More refugees. More shortages. More conflicts."

So shall we just talk about the weather instead?

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Peter Kuipers Munneke: "Yes, because we are enjoying these late summer days this week."

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Enjoy the sun, the beach, and the sea while you still can. Just as long as the sea does not rise too far, because then we will have to pack our bags and move away ourselves.

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