



The Climate Crisis and War

Climate change has played a role in many recent armed conflicts and is projected to be an even more serious driving force of future conflicts. The world's militaries are a major source of carbon emissions with their enormous consumption of fossil fuels and their sprawling industrial operations.

Working for peace and demilitarization is a climate issue. The world is perilously close to exceeding the remaining carbon budget to stay below 1.5° C. As long as major military powers continue to engage in war, global carbon emissions will rise and revenues needed to address the climate emergency will be used for war. It is essential that we stop war to end the climate emergency. Joining the climate justice movement with the anti-war movement will be a key step.

War Fuels Climate Change and Amplifies its Effects

Of all the institutional sources of climate change, none are bigger than the militaries of the world.

For example, the US military is the single biggest institutional source of carbon emissions in the world—with its massive reliance on fossil fuels to power its aircraft, ships, and land vehicles, and to power its thousands of facilities. The US military emits more carbon than most nations on earth, including Portugal and Denmark.

The global military industrial complex consumes many billions of dollars yearly that could be used for potential solutions to the climate crisis. Global military spending in 2022 was 2.24 trillion U.S. dollars, with the US and China together accounting for half of that amount. By allocating even half of this to addressing climate change, we would resolve the crisis quickly.

In times of war, the government redirects funding for climate remediation to the military budget. In the US and Europe, the Ukraine war has shown us that increased defense expenditure comes at the expense of environmental and social changes. When the military and war win, climate action loses.



The enormous amount of carbon emitted by the military amplifies the effects of climate change. Military conflict intensifies deforestation, desertification, air pollution, water contamination, and the poisoning of the soil. War prevents many communities from adapting to and recovering from climate change. Oil and gas infrastructure is often a target of military action— instantly burning huge quantities of fossil fuels. War destroys infrastructure—and replacing

infrastructure will eventually require very carbon-intensive industrial production and construction.

War creates internally displaced populations and refugees, as does climate change. These populations are then highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. As large numbers of climate refugees move to new locations, they often come into conflict with other vulnerable populations as natural resources become scarce—thus the cycle of climate change and violence and war is perpetuated.



Sustaining All Life (SAL) is an international grassroots organization working to end the climate emergency within the context of ending all divisions among people. *United to End Racism* (UER) consists of a wide diversity of people in many different countries, who are dedicated to eliminating racism in the world and supporting the efforts of all other groups with this goal. UER and SAL are projects of and use the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling. Re-evaluation Counseling (RC) is a well-defined theory and practice that helps people of all ages and backgrounds exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from emotional harm resulting from oppression and other hurts. By taking turns listening to each other and encouraging the release of painful emotions, people can heal old hurts and become better able to think, to speak out, and to organize and lead others in building a world in which human beings and other life forms are valued and the environment is restored and preserved. Re-evaluation Counseling currently exists in 95 countries.



SustainingAllLife.org



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Climate Change Creates Conditions for Violence and War

It is expected that by 2050, 200 million climate migrants will have been forced to move because extreme or changing weather has made their lives no longer viable where they live. In this year alone extreme weather events (droughts, fires, floods, and more) will likely displace 50 million people worldwide. We have already seen that 30 million people have been displaced in Pakistan.

The forced migration of people—both within nations and across international borders—creates economic, political, and social pressures as essential resources become scarce and inequities are magnified. Sometimes, forced migration adds to already-existing tensions within countries. These dynamics have played a major role in a number of recent armed conflicts.

The trend is expected to intensify as the longer-term impacts of climate change—food insecurity, lack of drinking water, heat stress, dramatic damage to coastal communities—become felt in more areas around the world. Regions projected to be most severely impacted by climate change are often among the world's poorest and/or most densely populated. These populations will have the least access to the resources they need for survival and for preventing armed conflict.

Healing from the Hurts of War and Climate Change

Climate change and war deeply affect everyone. They make us feel powerless, discouraged, and hopeless. Survivors of war are left terrified. All of us become entangled in the vicious cycle of destruction and trauma. The emotional hurts of war are so big that we often become numb. Our numbness and confusion can make it hard to think well. It can be hard to see the connection between war and climate change and to build the unity we need to end them.

We can heal from the traumas of war and climate change. We need to tell our stories connected to war and climate change. We need to become fierce allies to people who have been directly impacted by them. We need to reclaim our connection with all people and with the environment. As we fight to end all oppressions, stop war, and end the climate emergency, an important step will be redirecting the massive resources spent on war to climate solutions.





The Work of *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism*

It is possible to limit the effects of human-caused climate change and restore the environment—if we make some very large changes in our economy, our energy systems, and our lives in the next five to ten years. *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* believe the environmental crisis can be resolved only if we simultaneously address racism, genocide of Indigenous peoples, classism, sexism, and other oppressions. The impact of environmental destruction and climate change falls most heavily on the groups targeted by these oppressions, and on other vulnerable populations (including populations of people who are elderly, disabled, and very young). Making the changes needed will require a massive movement, spanning the globe, of people of every background fighting the effects of climate change, racism, and exploitation.

In *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* we believe that the barriers to building a sufficiently large and powerful movement include (1) longstanding divisions (usually caused by oppression, and especially racism and classism) between nations and between groups of people, (2) widespread feelings that it's too late and any actions will be ineffective, (3) denial of or failure to engage with the climate emergency, and (4) difficulties in effectively addressing the connections between the environmental crisis and the failures of our economic system. *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* work to address these and other issues.

The role of oppression

The economic and political forms of our societies demand growth and profit with little regard for people, other life forms, or the earth. This results in exploitation and oppression. Oppressions (such as racism, classism, sexism, and the oppression of young people) target everyone, inflicting tremendous injustices, limiting access to resources, and damaging the lives of billions of people. Once targeted by oppression, we tend to act toward others in ways that repeat the hurts that we have experienced. Much of the mental and emotional harm we experience is the result of this passing on of hurt. Our experience is that though people are vulnerable

to acting in oppressive ways, oppressive behavior is not inherent, but arises only when a person has been hurt emotionally. Oppressive societies manipulate this vulnerability to establish and maintain economic exploitation.

The importance of healing personal harm

The mental and emotional harm done to us by oppression and other hurtful experiences interferes with our ability to think clearly and sets groups of people against each other. This makes it difficult for us to think about and respond effectively to the climate emergency.

Healing from the hurts that help to hold oppression in place and lead to other harmful behavior is neither quick nor easy work. Many of us resist this personal healing work. We may have survived by numbing ourselves to the harm done to us by oppression. Some of us assume that we will never be free of this harm. In *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* we have learned that it is possible to free ourselves from these hurts and address barriers to effective organizing. We can heal from hurtful experiences if someone listens to us attentively and allows and encourages us to release the grief, fear, and other painful emotions. This happens by means of our natural healing processes—talking, crying, trembling, expressing anger, and laughing.

By releasing emotional pain in a supportive network, we can stay united, hopeful, thoughtful, joyful, and committed. This in turn strengthens us in building our movements to stop the effects of climate change and racism.



Sustaining All Life



For more information, see:

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