

...towards a strong global climate treaty

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International Youth Pressure Hillary Clinton to Protect Climate Refugees

Climate Advocates at State Department Call for Language in UN Treaty to Recognize and Protect Climate Refugees

Washington, DC — Concerned international youth pressured Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the State Department climate negotiating team to exemplify bold US climate leadership Monday afternoon by introducing language that acknowledges and protects climate refugees in the UN climate treaty to be determined at Copenhagen this December.

The youth gathered outside the State Department to create a "tent city" representing the 150 million refugees that will lose their homes by 2050 due to a 2 degrees Celsius rise in global temperature, a result of catastrophic climate change, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. They also held a press conference at 12:30 PM on Monday with ambassadors of small island states, whose territories remain the most vulnerable, and with advocates of climate refugees who shed more light on an issue the State Department has yet to truly address.

Climate refugees are defined by the UN as environmentally induced migrants, yet no global climate treaty includes language that acknowledges climate refugees to date. "Communities all over the Pacific are alarmed at coastal erosion and the advancing sea levels," said Diane McFadzien, the South Pacific regional climate change coordinator with the World Wildlife Fund. "We are already seeing signs of whole villages having to relocate...or important cultural sites such as burial grounds in Fiji being eroded."

The youth demanded that as the leader of the US State Department, Hillary Clinton must include more language about climate refugees into the working Copenhagen treaty text, thereby acknowledging the gravity of catastrophic climate change and its implications for US national security.

"It's imperative that Secretary Clinton steps up and takes climate change seriously by acknowledging and protecting people who will be forced to leave their homes," said Miya Ward, one of the youth advocates outside the State Department.

The climate advocates are working with Avaaz, an international advocacy organization with 3.5 million members worldwide.