

For Climate Justice The World Must Respect Sexual and Gender Diversity



The world is witnessing a defining moment because of climate change and its dangerous effects that extend to the whole planet. Extreme climate disturbances, such as changing weather conditions that cause a decrease or scarcity of food, a rise in sea level and the resulting unprecedented floods, in addition to desertification and drought of rivers and other forms of climate disturbances. All these changes have affected everyone around the world, but the magnitude of these effects is not equal for everyone, the poorest and marginalized groups are the most affected by climate changes.

Norms and social culture play a key role in determining how much individuals and groups are able to adapt or respond to climate changes, as social norms and culture, which create different levels of social roles, predetermine the availability of possibilities for individuals and groups that can contribute to mitigating or doubling the damages resulting from climate changes.

Sexual minorities, for example, “transsexual, trans, and lesbians and gays” are among the groups most vulnerable to severe damage from climate change. What sexual minorities suffer from a history full of social injustice, and its multiple forms of rejecting, exclusion and denial of accessing to services makes them on the top of the scene of the most vulnerable groups around the world.

On the level of laws, especially in MENA, which ban gender-based discrimination or discrimination on the basis of race, disability, or the economic and social level between male and female citizens while receiving relief aid at the time of natural disasters, these laws do not include sexual diversity, which makes sexual minorities outside the scope of providing assistance and protection that can contribute to saving the lives of thousands of male and female citizens in the afflicted and affected places, as part of an integrated legislative structure that does not recognize sexual minorities and sexual and gender diversity, yet at sometimes criminalizes it.

For example, but not limited to:

Firstly: On the level of housing:

The laws regulating the right to housing in MENA, which include the right of male and female citizens to adequate and healthy housing, and specify the most vulnerable groups and who need the care most “women, widows, divorced women, people with disabilities, the poor, and residents of dangerous and slum areas”, do not include sexual minorities. This situation impedes LGBT community to obtain adequate housing or obtain compensation related to the disaster areas, in which residential buildings are subject to collapse or drowning, and where residents must be moved to safe areas. These conditions which make sexual minorities homeless. So the number of homeless of them increases to join the ranks of those who are dismissed and displaced from their homes as a result of their sexual orientation or identity, whether at the family level or at the level of attempts to get independent housing, which makes them in direct confrontation with the climate fluctuations in areas where temperatures are higher or lower than the usual rates, in addition to living in areas with high levels of pollution; to be a victim of various diseases that eventually lead to many of them losing their lives.



Secondly: On the level of health services

Unfortunately, the laws regulating the right to health in MENA do not include equality in receiving health services and health care between men and women, and do not recognize sexual diversity and the associated needs of education, support, advice and receiving services within the various medical centers in line with the sexual orientation and gender identity of male and female citizens. The crisis of COVID-19 pandemic was great evidence of the marginalization and exclusion practiced against sexual minorities. They could not obtain any type of vaccines related to COVID-19 as a result of untypical form. Male and female transsexuals suffered from a lack or scarcity of receiving medical services related to psychological care, receiving hormones and performing surgeries, in addition to the scarcity or absence of access to treatments related to HIV, and depriving the injured of receiving emergency health services in many different medical centers as a result of HIV infection.

These deteriorating conditions in the health sector were a direct result of local decisions and instructions related to the regulation of receiving medical services during the pandemic, which did not consider sexual minorities among the vulnerable groups and infection with the COVID-19 virus, which resulted in the absence or scarcity of providing services and treatments; a situation that contributed to raising unprecedented prices for the services received, and the vast majority of sexual minorities are deprived of access to medical care. It is expected that these conditions will worsen as a result of climate changes and their repercussions related to the emergence or activity of viruses and some epidemic or incurable diseases such as cancer.

Thirdly: On level of work

In general, sexual minorities are considered to belong to the irregular employment, as they have job opportunities that are characterized by vulnerability and unsustainability, specifically for transgender people, as a result of social exclusion and rejection practiced against them, as well as gays and lesbians if they declare their sexual orientation.

Unfortunately, what makes the situation worse is that international treaties and conventions related to work, as well as local laws regulating work, do not all mention sexual minorities, especially in the definitions related to sex and gender equality in employment opportunities, which excludes sexual minorities from their legitimate rights to employment whether in public or private sector, or the administrative sector of the executive authority, as well as putting obstacles on legal and social level in front of their attempts to manage their small private projects, in addition to giving the authorities or labor boards the opportunity to dismiss them as a result of their sexual orientations or identities. We cannot ignore the working environment of irregular worker which lacks occupational health and safety standards, which increases the chances of work-related diseases in an environment controlled by polluted air, a situation that contributes to further impoverishment of sexual minorities and contributes to the high rates of violence practiced against them and puts obstacles in front of opportunities to empower them on economic level to face the claims of climate change.

Fourthly: On level of education

One of the most important challenges which face education in MENA region is the absence of attempts to include comprehensive sexual education in educational curricula at different stages; the situation that generally contributes to more gender-based violence, widening the gender gap in general, and increase the crisis of sexual minorities in particular. This is as gays and lesbians are subjected to violence within educational institutions, which reaches to depriving them of continuing in the classroom if their sexual orientation is discovered or announced. In addition, the transgender are also prohibited from attending different school stages if they declared their sexual identity, in addition to the severe intransigence practiced by the authorities when they prevent transgender people from obtaining identification papers in order to continue their education, as well as documenting their previous educational certificates.

Those conditions that directly contribute to the limited opportunities for them to continue in education and training, and a stumbling block between them and the information that they can obtain regarding climate changes and their repercussions and how to confront and adapt to them.

Facing Climate Changes and Achieving Justice

Achieving climate justice is closely linked to achieving social, economic and political justice for marginalized groups, which suffer from a lack of representation in regard to the policies and measures that are put forward, whether by local or international institutions and authorities, as well as the policies that are proposed and discussed on the level of political leaders in the world during conferences related to climate, that is why the undersigned believe that there is an urgent need for a real international political will which targets the achievement of climate justice for all.

- Minorities, whether sexual, ethnic, or ideological, must be represented in discussions about the climate change crisis, and they must participate in policy-making related to confronting and adapting to climate changes, provided that one of the criteria for evaluating those policies and measures taken to confront climate changes is to include rights of minorities everywhere on the planet.
- The criteria of the United Nations fund, which is to be established to support poor countries to confront climate change, must contain procedures for the distribution and extent of support provided to countries based on measures that guarantee the commitments of the authorities in the countries to which support is provided to develop policies and measures that recognize the rights of sexual minorities on an equal basis with all male and female citizens, as well as including their rights in the measures related to addressing the climate change crisis as one of the criteria for providing financial and technical support to them.
- The criteria for following up progress in the issue of adaptation to climate change that countries submit to the United Nations in accordance with the Paris Agreement should contain policies, procedures and measures that guarantee the rights of sexual minorities on the local legislative level, as well as services related to health and education systems and policies, housing and employment in order to enable all people to tools that contribute to facing and adapting to climate change.

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