

## Open Letter To COP28 Participating Governments re UAE Human Rights and Climate Concerns

13 September 2023

To the Participating Governments at the COP28 Climate Conference,

We write as a global network of organizations with grave human rights concerns regarding the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), host of the 2023 COP28 climate negotiations. We support the [concerns expressed by climate justice movements](#) that allowing COP28 to be held by the rulers of a repressive petrostate, and overseen by an oil executive, is reckless, represents a blatant conflict of interest, and threatens the legitimacy of the whole process.

Climate justice and human rights are deeply interconnected – there cannot be one without the other. As COP28 delegates prepare to attend the talks in Dubai, it is crucial for the international community to use the opportunity to shine a spotlight on the UAE's human rights record and to stand in solidarity with communities on the frontlines working to stop climate change impacts and human rights violations in the UAE and across the world.

We, as a global network of civil society organizations, will not be silenced by a government that has long used surveillance, propaganda tactics, and violent repression to silence critics, control public discourse, and shut down civil society organizations and movements. We will not allow for COP28 and the urgent and ambitious climate commitments needed from this process to be derailed or watered down by greenwashing efforts. We will oppose any attempt to use COP28 and our presence to greenwash this repressive government. Rather, we call for COP28 to be used to shine the global spotlight on the human rights violations perpetrated against communities inside the UAE — especially prisoners of conscience, migrant workers, women, and LGBTQI+ communities — and beyond. We won't allow for our solidarity to be weaponized by wealthy industrialized countries to point the finger at the UAE and at the same time refuse to take responsibility for their historical and continued human rights violations and for their historical and continued role in creating and fueling the climate crisis.

At COP28 and beyond, we reiterate our call that there can be no climate justice without human rights, and there can be no human rights without climate justice.

**As a global network of civil society organizations, we the undersigned urge you to take the following immediate steps to address the UAE's ongoing human rights crisis and to ensure that COP28 climate negotiations produce the ambitious commitments necessary to address global climate change:**

**1. Demand that the UAE not spy on COP28 attendees and end unlawful state surveillance that violates international human rights law and standards.**

The UAE is a surveillance state that uses its technology to [spy](#) on [millions of people](#) both inside and outside its borders. The UAE must end all unlawful state surveillance that violates international human rights law and standards, including the right to privacy. The UAE must refrain from conducting surveillance related to COP28 and its attendees. In addition, the UAE must also cease the use of spyware and surveillance technologies to repress peaceful critics [and journalists](#), stop censoring and [controlling Internet usage](#) and communication networks, and allow full access to all encrypted messenger apps and [virtual private networks](#) (VPNs).

## **2. Call on the UAE to release all prisoners of conscience.**

The rulers of the UAE have [unjustly imprisoned](#) numerous Emirati human rights defenders, civil society activists, and political dissidents. In 2021, these [human rights concerns](#) led the European Parliament to [vote to “encourage Member States not to participate”](#) in the UAE Dubai World Expo, a decision that [received international attention](#). The UAE must release all prisoners of conscience, stop harassing their families, close all secret prisons, and stop torturing detainees.

## **3. Demand action on UAE violations of women’s rights.**

COP28 attendees must refuse to meet with UAE officials who have committed violence against women, such as Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum ([kidnapping of his adult daughters](#) and [spousal abuse](#)) and UAE Minister of “Tolerance” Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan ([accused of rape](#)). The UAE must investigate and prosecute these individuals, free the disappeared Dubai Princess Shamsa, and repeal [laws](#) that discriminate against women.

## **4. Condemn UAE violations of LGBTQI+ rights.**

The UAE must repeal all laws that [criminalize](#) LGBTQI+ individuals, end all discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and respect freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly for LGBTQI+ individuals.

## **5. Call for workers’ rights reforms and reparations for forced labor.**

The UAE monarchy must pay reparations to all migrant workers who built or have worked at the site of the COP28 facilities ([Expo City Dubai](#)) [under conditions of abuse and forced labor](#), commit to protecting migrant workers from [exposure to extreme heat](#) and related occupational risks, lift the ban on independent trade unions, abolish the Kafala system of labor sponsorship, and end all [sex trafficking and conditions of sexual slavery](#) in Dubai.

## **6. Urge the UAE to stop supporting human rights violators in Yemen and across the Middle East and North Africa.**

The UAE must end its long history of supporting human rights violations and abuses by armed groups and governments that violate human rights, including in Yemen, [Bahrain](#), [Egypt](#), [Libya](#), and [Tunisia](#). In Yemen, the UAE must pay reparations to people [harmed by Saudi/UAE-led airstrikes on civilians](#) and the Saudi/UAE military coalition’s [blockade](#). The UAE must also [stop](#)

[supporting](#) abuses by armed groups in Yemen [that are responsible](#) for violations of international law. In Libya, the UAE must stop violating the UN Security Council's comprehensive arms embargo and [stop supplying arms to any armed forces in the country](#).

## **7. Publicly repudiate UAE greenwashing and fossil fuel hypocrisy:**

The UAE must end its greenwashing [campaign](#), abandon its [plans to dramatically increase state oil and gas production](#), and rectify the profound conflict of interest created by [UAE state oil company chief executive Sultan al-Jaber](#) also serving as president of the COP28 climate negotiations.

In addition, we urge all nations to make meaningful and ambitious commitments at COP28, with rich countries taking responsibility for their historical emissions and leading the way with commitments in line with their [common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities](#) and principles of equity. COP28 must produce a global commitment to phase out all fossil fuels and fossil fuel subsidies at the speed needed to keep global average temperature increases below 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.

The entire world will be impacted by the agreements reached during the COP28 climate negotiations. Unfortunately, the legitimacy of the conference and the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is at risk if human rights and civic space aren't protected in the UAE and across the world, and if major polluters and rich countries continue to interfere with the urgent and drastic climate commitments that are needed. As global civil society organizations, groups, and movements, we reiterate our deepest concern and urgent call for both human rights and climate justice to be at the center of the COP process this year and always.

Sincerely,

### Signatories:

Access Now (Global)

Action Corps (USA)

Action Jeunesse pour le Développement (AJED-Congo) (Africa)

Actions pour la Réinsertion Sociale de la Femme (ARSF) (Democratic Republic of Congo )

African Coalition on Green Growth (Zimbabwe)

AGHAM Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (Philippines)

Agir Pour La Sécurité Et La Souverainete Alimentaire Assa (Democratic Republic of Congo )

Aid/Watch (Australia)

AIKA Alliance (Madagascar / Africa)

All Nepal Peasants Federation (Nepal)

ALQST for Human Rights (UK)

Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (Sub Saharan Africa )

Amanecer People's Project (USA)

Amnesty International (Global)  
APOC (Latin America)  
ART NOT WAR (USA)  
Asia Pacific Network of Environment Defenders (APNED) (Asia and the Pacific)  
Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development (Asia)  
Asociacion Ciudadana Por Los Derechos Humanos (Argentina)  
Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA) (Latin America)  
Asociación La Ruta del Clima (Latin America)  
Association APEDDUB (Tunisia / North Africa)  
Association Jeunes Agriculteurs (AJA) (West Africa )  
Association of Women of Southern Europe AFEM (Europe)  
Association Pour Le Développement Rural Integre De Nganda Tsundi (Democratic Republic of Congo)  
ATTAC CADTM Morocco (Morocco)  
Attac France (France / Europe)  
Avaaz (USA)  
Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bangladesh)  
Bank on our Future (UK)  
BDS Movement for Palestinian Rights (Middle East / North Africa)  
Better Brazoria: Clean Air & Water (USA)  
Blue Earth organization (Kenya)  
Budget Advocacy Network Sierra Leone (Sierra Leone)  
Buliisa Initiative for Rural Development Organization (Uganda )  
Cadire Cameroon Association (Cameroon / Central Africa )  
CADTM International Network (Global)  
Cameroon Women's Peace Movement (CAWOPEM) (Cameroon / Central Africa )  
CAN Africa (Africa)  
CAN International (Global)  
CAN Latin America (CANLA) (Latin America & the Caribbean)  
Care About Climate (North America)  
Center for Environmental Concerns - Philippines (Philippines / Asia)  
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)  
Center for International Policy (USA)  
Center for Rights And Democracy (CRD) South Sudan (South Sudan )  
Central Autónoma De Trabajadores Del Perú - CATP-PERU (Perú )  
Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions, SAK (Europe)  
Centre For 21st Century Issues (Nigeria / West Africa)  
Centre for Citizens Conserving Environment & Management (CECIC) (Uganda)  
Centre for Climatology and Applied Research (Botswana)  
Centre for Environmental Justice (Sri Lanka)  
Centre for Social Change (University of Johannesburg) (South Africa)  
Centro de Desarrollo Humano. CDH/ Honduras (Latin America)  
CGIL (Europe)  
Chesapeake Climate Action Network (USA)

Citizen's Network For Community Development Zambia (Zambia)  
CIVICUS (Global)  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues (USA)  
Climate Action Network Australia (Australia)  
Climate Action Network Zimbabwe (CANZIMBABWE) (Zimbabwe)  
Climate Change Network for Community-based Initiatives, Inc (Philippines)  
CODEPINK (USA)  
Collectif Sénégalais des Africaines pour la Promotion de l'Éducation Relative à l'Environnement (COSAPERÉ) (Senegal / West Africa)  
Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (Québec / Canada / North America)  
Confederación Nacional de Unidad Sindical (Dominican Republic)  
Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN) (USA)  
Destination Zero (Canada)  
Dibeen for Environmental Development (West Asia)  
Disability Peoples Forum Uganda (Uganda)  
Eco Women Initiative (Nigeria)  
Ecologistas en Acción (Spain / Europe)  
Electra Energy Cooperative (Greece / Europe)  
Electronic Frontier Foundation (Global)  
Emmaus International (Zimbabwe)  
Equidem (India)  
Extinction Rebellion US (USA)  
FairSquare (UK)  
Fairwatch (Europe)  
Feminist Majority Foundation (USA)  
FIDEP Foundation (Ghana )  
Fiji Youth SRHR Alliance (Pacific)  
Food Sovereignty and Climate Justice Forum (Nepal)  
Freedom Forward (USA)  
Friends of the Earth Finland (Europe)  
Friends of the Earth International (Global)  
Friends of the Earth Ireland (Europe)  
Friends of the Earth Japan (Japan)  
Friends of the Earth Norway (Naturvernforbundet) (Norway)  
Friends of the Earth Scotland (Europe)  
Fundacion Plurales (Argentina)  
GAIA - Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (Global )  
GARED (Togo)  
GDMR (Mozambique )  
Global Justice Now (Europe)  
Global Platforms (East Africa )  
Global Witness (Brazil / South America)  
Green Leaf Advocacy and Empowerment Center (West Africa)  
groundWork (Friends of the Earth, South Africa) (Africa)

Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) (Lebanon)  
Health Advocacy International (USA)  
Health of Mother Earth Foundation South Sudan (South Sudan / Eastern Africa )  
Iceland Nature Conservation Association (Europe)  
IFEX (Middle East / North Africa)  
Indian National Trade Union Congress-INTUC (India / Asia)  
Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation (IPMSDL) (Global)  
innovation pour le Développement et la Protection de l'Environnement (Democratic Republic of Congo )  
Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (USA)  
International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (IANGEL) (USA)  
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) (Global)  
International Network of Liberal Women (Europe)  
International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) (Global)  
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) (Switzerland )  
International Student Environmental Coalition (Trinidad and Tobago / Caribbean)  
International Tibet Network (UK)  
International Trade Union Confederation - Asia Pacific (Asia and the Pacific)  
International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) (Global)  
International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) (Global)  
Italian Climate Network (Europe)  
JA! Justica Ambiental (Mozambique)  
Jordens Vänner / Friends of the Earth Sweden (Sweden)  
Just Foreign Policy (USA)  
Kikandwa Environmental Association (Uganda)  
KIRDARC Nepal (Nepal)  
KRuHA (Indonesia )  
LDC Watch (Global / Least Developed Countries)  
Legal Resources Foundation Trust (Kenya)  
Lekeh Development Foundation (Nigeria )  
Les Amis de la Terre-Togo (Togo)  
Libyan American Alliance (USA)  
Ligue Pour La Solidarité Congolaise (Democratic Republic of Congo / Africa)  
Madagascar Gender and Climate Justice Coalition (Madagascar)  
MADRE (Global)  
Maison des Organisations de la Société Civile (MOSC) Anjouan (Comores)  
Manica Youth Assembly Trust (Zimbabwe)  
MARBE SA (Costa Rica)  
MARMO-MAR MOÇAMBIQUE (Mozambique)  
MENA Rights Group (Switzerland)  
Mendoza Sin Fracking (Latin America)  
MenEngage Global Alliance (Global)  
Migrant Worker's Voice (Uganda )  
Milieudefensie (Friends of the Earth Netherlands) (The Netherlands)

Misereor (Europe)  
National Alliance for Right to Food Nets (Nepal)  
National Education Union (UK)  
National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal (NIDWAN) (Asia)  
National Indigenous Women's Federation (Nepal / South Asia)  
Natural Justice (Africa)  
Nipe Fagio (Tanzania / East Africa)  
No Peace Without Justice (Global)  
ODRI-Office against discrimination, racism and intolerance (Global)  
Oil & Gas Action Network (North America)  
Oilfield Witness (USA)  
One Earth Sangha (USA)  
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (Pakistan )  
Pathways for Women's Empowerment and Development/Integrated Agricultural Training Center (PaWEDIATC) (Cameroon )  
Peace Action (North America )  
PEN America (USA)  
People in Need (Czech Republic)  
PLADES-PERU (Peru)  
Politics4Her (Global)  
Presente.org (USA)  
Pro Natura /Friends of the Earth Switzerland (Switzerland)  
Project On Middle East Democracy (POMED)  
Razom We Stand (Ukraine )  
Reacción Climática - Bolivia (Bolivia / Latin America)  
RECODEF Sénégal AACJ (Senegal)  
Recourse (UK)  
Red de defensoras del Ambiente y el Buen Vivir (Argentina)  
Red Ecofeminista Latinoamericana y del Caribe (Latin America & the Caribbean)  
Regional Centre for International Development Cooperation - RCIDC (Uganda)  
Réseau Des Associations Pour La Protection De L'environnement Et La Nature Rapen (West Africa )  
Responsible Growth \* NE Washington (USA)  
ReThinking Foreign Policy (USA)  
Rinascimento Green (Italy)  
Rise Economy (formerly California Reinvestment Coalition) (USA)  
Rural Area Development Programme (RADP) (Nepal)  
Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) (Nepal)  
Sak (Democratic Republic of Congo)  
Salam for Democracy and Human Rights (UK )  
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility (USA)  
Saramba Initiative (Madagascar)  
Seneca Lake Guardian (USA)  
SHE Changes Climate (Global)

Sierra Leone School Green Club (SLSGC) (Africa)  
SMEX (Lebanon)  
SOBREVIVENCIA, Amigos de la Tierra Paraguay (Latin America)  
South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) (South Asia)  
South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (South Africa)  
Southern Africa Climate Change Coalition (Botswana)  
Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI) (Southern Africa)  
Stay Grounded Network (Global)  
Sukaar Welfare Organization (Pakistan )  
Terre Des Du Burundi-Transnational (Africa)  
The General Federation of Workers' Unions in Iraq/The General Union of Workers in Iraq  
Electricity (Iraq)  
The Noordhoek Environmental Action Group (NEAG) (South Africa)  
Third Act (USA)  
Tierra Nativa / Amigos de la Tierra Argentina (Argentina)  
TRAFFED (Democratic Republic of Congo)  
Trend Asia (Indonesia)  
Tunisian United Network (USA)  
Turtle Island Restoration Network (USA)  
UDAPT (Ecuador)  
Unión General de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores de España (UGT) (Europe)  
Vigilance for Democracy and the Civic State (Tunisia)  
Waterberg Women Advocacy Organization (South Africa)  
WE-Women From Indigenous Nationalities (WE-WIN) (Nepal / South Asia)  
Western New York Peace Center (USA)  
Win Without War (USA)  
Women Empowerment Against Poverty of Nepal (WEAPoN) (Nepal)  
Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (Global)  
Women in Law and Development in Africa-Afrique de l'Ouest (WiLDAF-AO) (Togo)  
World Friends for Africa Burkina Faso (Burkina Faso / West Africa )  
World Organisation Against Torture (Global)  
Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) (Europe)  
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation (USA)  
YouthNet for Climate Justice (Global)  
Zimbabwe Climate Change Coalition (Zimbabwe)  
350 Côte d'Ivoire (Côte d'Ivoire / West Africa)  
7 Directions of Service (USA)