



### **A region in danger !**

Justice between environmental and economic aspects

# **Social and climate justice** between the economic and the political:

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This is an analytical conclusion that relied mainly on paper included in this book.

**"Crimes against people, crimes against nature: the impunity enjoyed by the masters of war is shared by their twins, the voracious masters of industry, who eat nature and, in the heavens, swallow the ozone layer."**

**Eduardo Galeano**

While human activities have always been closely linked to environmental systems, environmental issues acquired more significance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century owing to its link to the current neoliberal system. More than half a century after the end of World War Two, humanity is facing serious economic and social problems that were summed up by American sociologist and politician Susan George as the "triumph of neo-liberalism"<sup>215</sup>. Population growth and increasing consumption levels encouraged by this economic model led to the scarcity of natural resources available for individual citizens as well as to a remarkable deterioration in the environment. This, in turn, accentuated social inequality<sup>216</sup> and disrupted the relationship between people and their environment.

Environmental justice is a comprehensive concept that is no longer confined to the protection of forests, rivers, and animals, for it also encompasses the protection of human life on all levels. This means that environmental justice involves the relationship between people and their surroundings and its role in creating a balanced life based on equality and fair distribution of resources. This angle is linked to recent debates about an economy that is based on public good and that takes into consideration environmental sustainability and addresses environmental problems resulting from the current economic system. The concept of environmental justice cannot be separated from a broader concept: climate justice. Looking at environmental justice from a climate perspective "combines the politicization of environmental and climate justice with civil society activism and addresses the losses sustained by vulnerable groups that suffer from environmental deterioration and the decline of natural resources"<sup>217</sup>. That is why environmental justice has recently become "a major movement and organizing discourse in the environmental politics arena, and both the movement and the idea have had a large influence on the way that climate justice has been conceptualized"<sup>218</sup>. This also explains why "environmental justice frame has also been expanding topically and geographically over the years"<sup>219</sup>. The expansion of the concept of environmental justice is demonstrated in the way activism started to address environmental problems in different parts of the world such as climate change in South Africa, cold mining in Bulgaria, China's oil operations, and funding environmental NGOs in Ecuador<sup>220 221</sup>. The concept of environmental justice did not only grow vertically to include those new issues and countries, but also expanded horizontally to encompass worldwide issues such as trading in

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<sup>215</sup> Susan George. "A Short History of Neoliberalism": <https://www.tni.org/en/article/short-history-neoliberalism>

<sup>216</sup> Rajaa Kassab, Magda Bou Dagher-Kharrat, and Ziad Khaled. "Biodiversity from a climate and social justice perspective." Included in this book.

<sup>217</sup> Sultan Al Salem and Amr Adli. "Industrial development from a social and environmental justice perspective." Included in this book.

<sup>218</sup> [David Schlosberg and Lisette Collins.](#) "From Environmental to climate justice: climate change and the discourse of environmental justice", 2014: [http://www.ssent.svvsq.fr/IMG/pdf/schosbergcollins\\_from\\_ej\\_to\\_cj\\_wire\\_cc\\_2014.pdf](http://www.ssent.svvsq.fr/IMG/pdf/schosbergcollins_from_ej_to_cj_wire_cc_2014.pdf)

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> JoAnn Carmin and Julian Agyeman, eds. *Environmental Inequalities Beyond Borders: Local Perspectives on Global Injustices*. Cambridge, MA: Mit Press; 2011.

<sup>221</sup> Anguelovski I, Roberts D. "Spatial justice, and climate change: multi-scale impacts and local development in Durban, South Africa." JoAnn Carmin and Julian Agyeman. Op. Cit.

toxic substances<sup>222</sup>, food sovereignty and climate justice<sup>223</sup>. The link between environmental and climate justice was underlined when after Hurricane Katrina in the United States: "Katrina helped to expand the consideration of the climate-changing environment in the environmental justice movement. Environmental justice scholars and advocates began to see climate change as another environmental condition that demonstrates the broader social injustice of poor and minority communities"<sup>224</sup>. To put it in more general terms, it can be said that "the movement idea of climate justice originated with a focus on removing the causes of climate change, as well as addressing the inequitable impacts of the oil industry at all stages"<sup>225</sup>.

As the concept expanded, more issues were discovered to be closely linked to it. For example, researchers at CorpWatch, an American association that exposes environmental violations committed by multinational corporations<sup>226</sup>, noted that climate change "may well be the largest environmental justice issue of all time"<sup>227</sup>. Therefore, climate justice can be said to revolve around the idea that climate change is not only a natural phenomenon that can be addressed scientifically, but rather a broader concept deeply rooted into the history of economic systems that only prosper through the exploitation of natural resources, the expropriation of land, and the disruption of ecological systems<sup>228</sup>. While facts about the current economic system and its role in destroying the environment are obvious, resisting this system is far from easy. This is, to a great extent, because corporates involved in such actions and their corrupt political allies promote an environment-conscious discourse and take part in voicing their concerns about environmental violations. These corporates, as Eduardo Galeano puts it, "shed crocodile tears for the suffering of nature"<sup>229</sup>.

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<sup>222</sup> Pellow DN. *Resisting Global Toxics: Transnational Movements for Environmental Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Mit Press; 2007.

<sup>223</sup> Mohai P, Pellow D, Roberts JT. Environmental justice. *Annu Rev Environ Resour* 2009, 34 :405–430

<sup>224</sup> [David Schlosberg and Lisette Collins](#). . *Op. Cit.*

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> CorpWatch helped organize the first known Climate Justice Summit in The Hague

<sup>227</sup> [David Schlosberg and Lisette Collins](#). *Op. Cit.*

<sup>228</sup> "Seeking Climate Justice in International Agreements. Part I: Short reflections on Egypt's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC)." Social Justice Platform: <https://sjplatform.org/seeking-climate-justice-in-international-agreements/?lang=en>

<sup>229</sup> Eduardo Galeano. *Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World*. Picador, 2001

## First: The core and aspects of the problematics of social justice:



Studying climate justice requires looking into the social structures of a given country or region. This is because social justice is at the core of climate justice and it is not possible to understand the latter in isolation from the former especially in the Arab region where “gaps in health outcomes, unequal access to economic opportunities and environmental goods, widening disparities in income, wealth and education and the absence of meaningful venues to voice grievances remain”<sup>230</sup>. In 10 countries in the region, “116.1 million (40.6%) belong to poor households, of which 38.2 million (13.4%) live in acute poverty”<sup>231</sup>. In the past 10 years, civil conflicts and subsequent deterioration in public services had a negative impact on social justice, which led to the loss of gains acquired in the past decades<sup>232</sup>.

Social disparities and lack of justice are demonstrated in many ways across the region. For example, service and rent sectors constitute 77% of the Lebanese economy, which is mainly based in the capital and caters to its needs, hence marginalizing other sectors and areas. Many productive sectors such as agriculture, fishing, and domestic tourism were undermined while people’s health and lives were endangered under the pretext of development and job opportunities offered by service and rent sectors. This led to the impoverishment and marginalization of areas that do not serve this goal<sup>233</sup>. In Egypt, several new cities are built, but they only target high-income citizens, which are a minority. Therefore, it is not the type of housing that contributes to development. On the contrary, such projects widen the gap between different segments of society and cater to the needs of the rich at the expense of

<sup>230</sup> Social Justice Matters, A View from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations, 2018, Beirut, <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/social-justice-matters-arab-region-english.pdf>

<sup>231</sup> ESCWA and others, Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/2), p. 6.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Layla Riahi, Ahmed Zaazaa, Nadine Bekdache. “Social and climate justice in the context of urban planning in the Arab region.” Included in this book.

low-income citizens<sup>234</sup>. Injustice, however, does not exist in a vacuum and is closely linked to other issues such as security, development, and democracy<sup>235</sup>. That is why it is necessary to examine the status of social justice in the Arab region in the light of social, economic, and political development<sup>236</sup>. Development is, in fact, a multifaceted process that involves substantial changes in social structures, popular tendencies, state institutions, and economic growth in addition to the elimination of poverty and inequality<sup>237</sup>. Meanwhile, post-independence development patterns in the Arab region since independence have mainly relied on the exploitation of human and natural resources to fund investment in sectors that are integrated into the global economy. Governments also reduced wages to deal with unemployment and consolidate state institutions while creating a subsidy system for basic foodstuffs to make up for low incomes. This policy led to the decline of subsistence farming as well as substantial demographic changes that resulted from the migration of farmers to the cities to join the informal workforce<sup>238</sup>. Problems related to development patterns can be seen in Tunisia. Since Tunisia got its independence, the state kept wages very low while not controlling the prices of raw materials, which increased production costs. This led to the impoverishment of farmers and to the creation of speculation and corrupt lobbying networks that monopolized the use of land, resources, agricultural outputs, and the distribution and supply of basic foods such as grains, dairy products, and meat. Nepotism also controls the distribution of other products such as vegetables and feed. All those factors render farmers the most vulnerable in the agriculture sector<sup>239</sup>. In addition, existing development potentials were crushed in countries that witnessed political unrest, which turned into civil conflict<sup>240</sup>. These examples underline the structural imbalance resulting from the neoliberal pattern, which is the harshest face of capitalism. The Arab region was put under a lot of pressure by international financial institutions to start adopting neoliberal policies<sup>241</sup>. On the domestic level, there were certain networks whose interests neoliberalism served, hence aided in making the shift possible<sup>242</sup>. Despite growing demands for equality and social justice, which were most poignantly voiced in the 2011 Arab uprising, governments in the region implemented superficial reforms that did not abandon the core policies of neoliberalism. When the revolutionary wave started receding, neoliberal policies came back with full force even after many of the same governments admitted they were the main reason for the uprisings<sup>243</sup>.

Because the economic system serves intricate capitalist and political networks, resisting it is far from easy, especially that alliances on which this system is based are characterized by extreme rigidity<sup>244</sup>. This system does not also take into consideration the rights of the majority,

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<sup>234</sup> Zeinab Sorour. "Urban planning between environment and economy [Arabic]." Green Peace Middle East: <http://socialjusticeportal.afalebanon.org/publication/4409>

<sup>235</sup> Abdel Ghafar Shokr. "Social justice in the Arab world in light of developmental, democratic, and security failures [Arabic]." The Center for Arab Unity Studies: <https://bit.ly/3auoiqy>

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Rabei Wahba, Layla Riahi, Ali Aznac. "Food sovereignty and environmental violations: The case of Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco." Included in this book.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Abdel Ghaffar Shokr. Op. Cit.

<sup>241</sup> Wael Gamal. "Why is the neo-liberal project continuing in the Arab region?" *Social Justice in the Arab Region between Street Politics and Political Paths*. Arab Forum for Alternatives and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (North Africa Office): <http://www.afalebanon.org/en/publication/4823/social-justice-in-the-arab-region-between-street-politics-and-political-paths/>

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

hence is always linked to economic, social, environmental, and health disasters. For example, in Kuwait a major part of the marine industry, especially fishing, is controlled by state-sponsored capitalist networks, which directly affected the local economy and the gross domestic product. In the absence of laws that protect affected segments of the population, inequality was accentuated<sup>245</sup>. In addition, neoliberalism makes room for multinational companies to promote investment policies that aim at “developing” production systems to be in line with market policies that are supported by information technologies on one hand and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and continental and regional investment banks on the other hand. Those policies involve contradictory aspects since they are committed to economic growth while overlooking its negative impacts especially on marginalized groups, which is demonstrated in the implementation of reform programs imposed by international financial institutions<sup>246</sup>.

The impact of neoliberal policies is demonstrated on several levels in the Arab region and is particularly manifested through vulnerable groups. For example, with the remarkable rise in the number of refugees, it becomes obvious that race plays a major role in marginalizing particular communities. The same applies to women who, in many parts of the region, are still not considered major participants in the economy and most of them still work in the informal sector or in domestic unpaid labor<sup>247</sup>. The distribution of gross domestic product in the Arab region demonstrates that women are paid less wages and that their participation in the formal economy is minimal<sup>248</sup>. Geographical location is another factor since neoliberal policies are always accompanied by intensive investment in some regions and the marginalization of others. For example, there is a wide gap between northern and southern Algeria even though most natural resources are located in the latter. Locals in the south do not benefit from these resources whether through employment or development<sup>249</sup>. Workers are among the most affected groups, which is demonstrated in the case of the town of Chtouka Ait Baha in Morocco, which is home to more than 70,000 farm laborers, both male and female. The living conditions in Chtouka Ait Baha offer an example of the type of “development” supported by the state through creating a suitable environment for multi-nationals and adapting labor, investment, and tax legislations to market demands. The adoption of such legislation created a wide gap between agricultural and industrial workers. That is why one of the major demands put forward by agricultural unions is raising the wages of farm laborers to be equivalent to those of their counterparts in the industrial sector<sup>250</sup>. Neoliberal policies do not only affect current inhabitants but also extend to future generations. This is because resources that are used up to increase profits and accumulate wealth cannot be reproduced and because capitalist practices are always accompanied by violent measures such as evacuating locals

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<sup>245</sup> “Industrial development between economy and the environment [Arabic]” Arab Forum for Alternatives and Green Peace Middle East”: <http://socialjusticeportal.afaalebanon.org/publication/ /4478>

<sup>246</sup> Rabie Wahba, Amani Al Baedi, Ali Al Karkhi, and Salman Khairallah. “Water resources and social and environmental justice.” Included in this book.

<sup>247</sup> ILO, World Social Protection Report, 2017–19: Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (Geneva, 2017), p. xxxiii: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_604882.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_604882.pdf)

<sup>248</sup> ESCWA’s calculation based on Human Development Report 2016, table 4: Gender Development Index (GDI): <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GDI>.

<sup>249</sup> Reem Abdel Halim, Nissaf Brahimi, and Ali Saheb. “Energy sovereignty between environmental and social justice: The cases of Egypt, Algeria, and Iraq.” Included in this book.

<sup>250</sup> Rabei Wahba, Layla Riahi, Ali Aznac. Op. Cit.



from lands and houses, encroaching upon forests, and dredging coastlines under the pretext of development and economic growth<sup>251</sup>.

## Second: Climate justice gaps in the Arab region:

Projects that do not take environmental aspects into consideration are bound to deplete natural resources, hence undermine any chances of development and climate justice, especially in light of the absence of good governance<sup>252</sup>. Studies in this book examine factors that hinder the achievement of climate justice. One of the most important problems is climate change, which at times leads to water shortage, hence desertification and drought, and at others causes floods<sup>253</sup>. Drought forces farmers to leave their lands while floods, which result from rising sea levels, are expected to destroy fertile lands. Water shortage threatens several cities in the Arab region such as Cairo, Casablanca, and Algiers while overuse of water will eventually lead to the depletion of underground water, hence placing most countries in the region below water poverty line<sup>254</sup>. In addition, the region has already been witnessing political tension over water<sup>255</sup>. The sea is also becoming more acidic, which kills coral reefs, hence undermining biodiversity in the Red Sea and affecting thousands who work in fishing and tourism<sup>256</sup>. Rising temperatures as a result of climate change could kill thousands, especially farm laborers<sup>257</sup>. Lack of accountability in environment-related issues makes the situation worse as well as lack of evaluation methods (strategic and cumulative) and proper product life-cycle management<sup>258</sup>.

Northern countries exploit natural resources in the Arab region through international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and EU organizations. While those organizations call for taking major steps towards the protecting environment, ones that seem radical compared to actions taken by local governments, and while they examine the impact of environmental violations on the poor, they eventually side with capitalists and political elites. That is why their analyses of climate change do not include issues pertaining to class, social justice, and colonial history<sup>259</sup>. Absence of democracy makes it easier for autocratic governments to ally with international institutions and multinational corporations against both the environment and the people<sup>260</sup>.

Studies included in this book offer several examples. There is special focus on water resources that are either depleted, contaminated, or mismanaged, which not only affected the environment but also people living in regions in which those resources are located. In Iraq, draining the Mesopotamian Marshes not only affects climate balance and justice, but also leads to the displacement of locals and the disappearance of traditional economic activities<sup>261</sup>. In Egypt, the problem of water is not confined to shortage, but also extends to

<sup>251</sup> Layla Riahi, Ahmed Zaazaa, Nadine Bekdache. Op. Cit.

<sup>252</sup> Rabie Wahba, Amani Al Baedi, Ali Al Karkhi, and Salman Khairallah. Op. Cit.

<sup>253</sup> Hamza Hamouchene and Mika Minio-Paluello. *The Coming Revolution in North Africa: The Struggle for Climate Justice*. Arts Activism Education Research, April 28, 2015.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> The Arab Human Development Report 2009: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/challenges-human-security-arab-countries>

<sup>256</sup> Hamza Hamouchene and Mika Minio-Paluello. Op. Cit.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> The Arab Human Development Report 2009. Op. Cit.

<sup>259</sup> Hamza Hamouchene and Mika Minio-Paluello. Op. Cit.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Rabie Wahba, Amani Al Baedi, Ali Al Karkhi, and Salman Khairallah. Op. Cit.

unfair distribution and inefficient irrigation techniques, both affecting agricultural products and threatening the country's water security<sup>262</sup>. Energy is another example. Focusing on energy-intensive industries in Egypt contributes to climate injustice<sup>263</sup> and is also related to the position of the region within the global division of labor as a peripheral economy<sup>264</sup>. Population growth and demographic changes also accentuate already existing environmental problems such as climate change, desertification, and pollution<sup>265</sup>. That is why studies included in this book stress the idea that the use of natural resources is an environmental and rights issue in the first place<sup>266</sup>.

### Third: Problematics of the relationship between social and climate justice:

After undermining national liberation movements that played a major role in the post-independence development process that worked on achieving social justice, the economy was redefined based on market standards, hence creating a new model. The characteristics of this model have a direct and indirect impact on the environment<sup>267</sup>. Climate change is also linked to wealth and income disparities in the region<sup>268</sup>. In fact, most economic plans in the region lead to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few capitalists while further marginalizing vulnerable groups and undermining traditional economic activities<sup>269</sup>. In addition to the depletion of natural resources, the current economic system promotes privatization and globalization, hence accentuating inequality and concentrating wealth and power in the hands of the few<sup>270</sup>. While economic projects are implemented under the banner of growth and development, they prioritize profit, hence obstructing sustainable development<sup>271</sup>. The 2008 food crisis that caused famine and ignited protest waves across the Global South demonstrated the fragility the food system. This is because food production is monopolized by corporates that prioritize monoculture and export-oriented agriculture<sup>272</sup>. Added to that is the fact that 80% of the world's hungry live in regions that suffer from environmental deterioration and are subject to natural disasters, hence stressing the link between climate change on one hand and hunger and poverty on the other hand<sup>273</sup>.

Fair distribution features prominently in the relationship between natural resources and poverty. This is demonstrated in the case of natural gas pricing in Egypt. Factories lobby for buying natural gas at subsidized prices while subsidies are lifted for impoverished groups<sup>274</sup>. Energy-intensive factories are problematic not only because they consume a lot of energy at lower prices, which affects the distribution of resources, but also because they are not labor

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Sultan Al Salem and Amr Adli. Op. Cit.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> The Arab Human Development Report 2009. Op. Cit.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> "Different paths to Justice: The case of economy and the environment." Arab Forum for Alternatives and Green Peace Middle East: <http://www.afalebanon.org/en/publication/8561/different-paths-to-justice-the-case-of-economy-and-the-environment/>

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Rajaa Kassab, Magda Bou Dagher-Kharrat, and Ziad Khaled. Op. Cit.

<sup>270</sup> "Different paths to Justice: The case of economy and the environment [Arabic]." Op. Cit.

<sup>271</sup> Rabie Wahba, Amani Al Baedi, Ali Al Karkhi, and Salman Khairallah.

<sup>272</sup> Hamza Hamouchene and Mika Minio-Paluello. Op. Cit.

<sup>273</sup> George Karzam. "Climate justice only possible with resistance to monopolies and capitalist-oriented governments [Arabic]." <https://bit.ly/3uC6eIX>

<sup>274</sup> Reem Abdel Halim, Nissaf Brahimi, and Ali Saheb. Op. Cit.



intensive and require a lot of capital<sup>275</sup>. State support for those factories deprive marginalized groups of their fair share of energy and those same groups are also the ones who are most affected by the environmental damages caused by these factories. They are also less capable of defending their rights<sup>276</sup>. It is noteworthy that environmental justice cannot be achieved unless people enjoy equal rights. That is why in a context where there are social and economic disparities and where the decision-making process is monopolized by political elites, environmental justice is not easy to achieve<sup>277</sup>.

Fossil fuel is one of the main causes of climate change since Western governments and corporates, together with their political allies in each country, use fossil fuel despite its environmental hazards. Fossil fuel is, in fact, one of the direct manifestations of a century of imperialism and capitalism<sup>278</sup>. Despite growing campaigns for shifting to green energy resources, fossil fuel still secures more than 85% of total energy demand across the world, compared to 10% from renewable energy (7% from hydroelectric energy, the oldest form of renewable energy)<sup>279</sup>. Fossil fuel is a main source of development funding in several countries in the Arab region such as Iraq, Libya, and Algeria and almost the only source in the Gulf region.

All the above demonstrates that the relationship between social and climate justice, or in broader terms between economy and the environment, is not direct in the sense that one factor affects the other. It is rather a relationship that can best be described as circular since any deterioration in the environment is accompanied by deterioration in the economy and vice versa, but it is not possible to determine which happened first. That is why addressing such a problem requires breaking the vicious circle in which both the economy and the environment keep deteriorating in a way that threatens people's lives and living conditions. That is why environmental issues are always included, even if not directly, in protests that are driven by social and economic grievances<sup>280</sup>.

#### Fourth: Common factors in the Arab region:

While studies included in this book dealt with particular countries and focused on the specificity of each context, common factors can be detected between different cases, hence between countries in the Arab region. For example, policies pertaining to climate in the Arab region are controlled by political and capitalist powers and environmental issues are always addressed by international institutions<sup>281</sup>. Even though the structure of agricultural economy differs from one country to another, neoliberal policies, facilities offered to investors including access to land, and adopting policies that rely on food security are common among Arab

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<sup>275</sup> Sultan Al Salem and Amr Adli. Op. Cit.

<sup>276</sup> "Industrial development between economy and the environment [Arabic]." Op. Cit.

<sup>277</sup> Rabie Wahba, Amani Al Baedi, Ali Al Karkhi, and Salman Khairallah. Op. Cit.

<sup>278</sup> Hamza Hamouchene and Mika Minio-Paluello. Op. Cit.

<sup>279</sup> Carole Nakhle. "Moving towards renewable energy: Changing the economy comes first [Arabic]." *Al Akhbar*, September 24, 2018: <https://al-akhbar.com/Capital/258431>

<sup>280</sup> Abdel Halim, Nissaf Brahimi, and Ali Saheb. Op. Cit.

<sup>281</sup> Hamza Hamouchene and Mika Minio-Paluello. Op. Cit.

countries<sup>282</sup>. Allowing investors to get hold of land constitutes a grave social and environmental, and possibly security, threat<sup>283</sup>.

The Arab region is almost entirely dominated at the moment by global capitalism that played a major role in climate change and the depletion of natural resources<sup>284</sup>. The negative impact of adopting neoliberal policies and liberalizing the economy is now seen in the agriculture sector and food sovereignty of Arab countries<sup>285</sup>. Trade agreements between northern and southern countries contribute to the depletion of resources in the former. In fact, northern countries and financial institutions put pressure on Arab countries to accept bilateral trade agreements that, in many, cases violate international treaties in order to control their resources<sup>286</sup>. Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco offer a clear example of the impact of neoliberal policies, especially as far as food is concerned<sup>287</sup>. Although agriculture in the three countries was also severely affected<sup>288</sup>, those policies are still implemented and reached their peak in Morocco and Tunisia, where agricultural investors became in full control in a way that undermines the food sovereignty of the two countries<sup>289</sup>.

The global capitalist system imposes on countries that depend on extractive industries debts whose payment requires maintaining this type of industries. That is why environmental measures taken by most foreign investors and corporates that implement projects in Arab countries are much laxer than those implemented in the countries they come from<sup>290</sup>. Contradictions inherent in the Arab region play a role in complicating the issue since it is not possible to compare a country like Sweden to Egypt, which still has a long way to go in terms of industrial development and income rates, when it comes to discussing economic growth<sup>291</sup>.

Achieving sustainable development in the Arab world is not possible without mitigating environmental risks and looking into alternatives to adapt to climate change. However, Arab countries still do not have the information required for doing so, especially with the lack of influence strategies and a methodical monitoring process<sup>292</sup>. The version of development adopted in the Arab region does not prioritize the interests of the majority, which is demonstrated in the case of urban planning. Despite the dominance of official discourses that promise prosperity and improvement of living standards, locals come to see the stark contrast between those promises and reality on the ground and realize that promoted development models are far from sustainable<sup>293</sup>.

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<sup>282</sup> Hanna Batatu (1984) *The Egyptian, Syrian, and Iraqi revolutions: Some observations on their underlying causes and social character*. Center for Contemporary Arab, 1984.

<sup>283</sup> Zeinab Sorour. "Food sovereignty between climate and social justice [Egypt]." Arab Forum for Alternatives and Green Peace Middle East: <http://socialjusticeportal.afalebanon.org/publication/4512/>

<sup>284</sup> North African Network for Food Sovereignty: <https://www.siyada.org/ar/>

<sup>285</sup> Zeinab Sorour. "Food sovereignty between climate and social justice [Egypt]." Op. Cit.

<sup>286</sup> Rajaa Kassab, Magda Bou Dagher-Kharrat, and Ziad Khaled. Op. Cit.

<sup>287</sup> Gilbert Achcar. "On the Arab Inequality Puzzle: The Case of Egypt." Wiley Online Library: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/dech.12585>

<sup>288</sup> "Water resources: Depriving farmers of water to serve capitalist export agriculture [Arabic]": <https://bit.ly/2PcDxTR>

<sup>289</sup> Rabei Wahba, Layla Riahi, Ali Aznac. Op. Cit.

<sup>290</sup> "Industrial development between economy and the environment [Arabic]." Op. Cit.

<sup>291</sup> "Different paths to Justice: The case of economy and the environment [Arabic]." Op. Cit.

<sup>292</sup> Rajaa Kassab, Magda Bou Dagher-Kharrat, and Ziad Khaled. Op. Cit.

<sup>293</sup> Layla Riahi, Ahmed Zaazaa, Nadine Bekdache. Op. Cit.

The impact of environmental deterioration on the economy and social justice is illustrated in the water crisis. Water and all political, economic, and rights issues related to it are becoming increasingly important for the entire world, and this is particularly applied to the Arab region<sup>294</sup>. The region suffers from water poverty and is incapable of coping with population growth<sup>295</sup>. The scarcity of water is directly related to climate change and subsequent pollution and deterioration of biodiversity in the region<sup>296</sup>. The impact of climate change in the Arab region is more severe than in other parts of the world<sup>297</sup>. This is partly because of demographic change and lack of environmental precautions in the industry sector in addition to the absence of environmental justice<sup>298</sup>. The effect of environmental deterioration on the economy is demonstrated in the increase of food imports as a result of unprecedented drought waves countries like Algeria and Syria suffered from. This, in turn, is reflected on the price of food commodities<sup>299</sup>.

The major challenge faced by environmental organizations in the Arab world is raising awareness about the impact of climate change and neoliberal policies on the environment and addressing environmental problems in areas inhabited by impoverished groups<sup>300</sup>. This requires looking into the injustice inherent in the energy pricing system in countries like Egypt, Algeria, and Iraq and the impact of this system on marginalized groups<sup>301</sup>. It is also important to start replacing fossil fuel with environment-friendly sources of energy, looking into ways of coping with climate change, finding new sources of water, restructuring the agriculture sector, installing salinity barriers, and revising the planning of cities. The problem, however, is that the same entities that contributed to climate change are the ones that now promote mitigating its effects and protecting the environment in order to make more profit. Several reports issued in Arabic warn of the impact of climate change, yet neoliberal institutions such as the World Bank, the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), and EU organizations monopolize knowledge in this field, hence their research is based on what best serves their interests. That is why they do not address the impact of climate change on particular classes or issues like social justice, oppression, and imperial history. The analyses these entities offer do not hold Western countries and corporations accountable for climate change. Most literature on climate change in the Middle East and North Africa does not mention discrimination or resistance<sup>302</sup>.

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<sup>294</sup> Rabie Wahba, Amani Al Baedi, Ali Al Karkhi, and Salman Khairallah. Op. Cit.

<sup>295</sup> Zeinab Sorour. "Urban planning between environment and economy [Arabic]." Op. Cit,

<sup>296</sup> Rajaa Kassab, Magda Bou Dagher-Kharrat, and Ziad Khaled. Op. Cit.

<sup>297</sup> <sup>297</sup> "Different paths to Justice: The case of economy and the environment [Arabic]." Op. Cit.

<sup>298</sup> Sultan Al Salem and Amr Adli. Op. Cit.

<sup>299</sup> Reem Abdel Halim, Nissaf Brahimi, and Ali Saheb. Op. Cit.

<sup>300</sup> Mishkat Al Mumin. "Environmental justice to achieve Arab progress [Arabic]." Arab Forum for Environment and Development. January 2007: <http://www.afedmag.com/web/ala3dadAlSabiaSections-details.aspx?id=795&issue=&type=3&cat=>

<sup>301</sup> Reem Abdel Halim, Nissaf Brahimi, and Ali Saheb. Op. Cit.

<sup>302</sup> Hamza Hamouchene and Mika Minio-Paluello. Op. Cit.

## Conclusion: Breaking the vicious cycle:

As demonstrated in the studies included in this book, it is not possible to deal with issues pertaining to social and climate justice separately. All issues need to be addressed in parallel on three levels: local, regional, and international. On the local level, policy reforms should be accompanied by raising awareness on social justice and climate change. On the regional level, Arab countries need to forge alliances through which they can deal with common problems. On the international level, steps have to be taken towards putting an end to the exploitation of resources in the south by Western powers.

On the local level, policies need to include environmental justice and adopt alternatives to the current production system while looking into the status of traditional economic activities that were destroyed by current policies<sup>303</sup>. Governments need to set comprehensive strategies that include all sectors in order to work towards protecting the environment and biodiversity. Social movements and civil society should monitor the implementation of those strategies and shadow reports evaluating the process need to be taken into consideration<sup>304</sup>. Issues pertaining to the protection of the environment need to be included in constitutions as well as regulating laws that determine the legal steps to be taken in any dispute related to the impact of investment projects, whether domestic or international, on local communities<sup>305</sup>. Environmental activism will play a major role in lobbying for policy reform and raising awareness on topics such as biodiversity<sup>306</sup>. The fair distribution of natural resources should also be included as well as supporting small farmers, conducting research on the viability of projects that might deplete resources, putting an end to the contamination of natural resources, and taking sustainable development goals into consideration while setting resource management plans<sup>307</sup>.

Addressing challenges related to water scarcity require merging between immediate response to people's needs and adopting a long-term approach that aims at coming up with contingency plans in the face of crises. This will not be possible without adequate management of water use and making sure it is fairly distributed among citizens. Investing in technology transfer is pertinent in this case since it will help in improving the efficiency of water resources and the quality of agricultural products as well as ensure the optimal use of agricultural land<sup>308</sup>. Arab governments need to reconsider agricultural policies through adopting technologies that improve production, creating job opportunities in rural areas, and

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<sup>303</sup> <sup>303</sup> "Different paths to Justice: The case of economy and the environment." Op. Cit.

<sup>304</sup> Rajaa Kassab, Magda Bou Dagher-Kharrat, and Ziad Khaled. Op. Cit.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Rabie Wahba, Amani Al Baedi, Ali Al Karkhi, and Salman Khairallah. Op. Cit.

<sup>308</sup> "Solutions to water challenges in the Middle East and North Africa region: Q&A with Pasquale Steduto this World Water Week." Food and Agriculture Organization, August, 30, 2018: <http://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1150870/>

expanding social security nets<sup>309</sup>. State institutions that work in environmental affairs need to adopt the concept of environmental justice and support communities that were affected by environmental violations<sup>310</sup>.

Regarding food sovereignty, it is important to modify laws related to small farmers, fishermen, and shepherds to ensure that they get their rights while expanding social insurance and healthcare networks. Agricultural activities such as production, harvesting, and distribution should be designed in a way that achieves food sovereignty while not giving in to pressure by corporations that focus on export agriculture, which not only undermines food sovereignty but also harms the environment<sup>311</sup>. It is also important to support social movements by small farmers in countries where capitalist agricultural estates are located and implement agricultural reform from the bottom up so that the rights of farmers are preserved and their access to resources is guaranteed. Improving farmers' conditions is linked to getting back land that is expropriated by the state and multinational corporation and respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas<sup>312</sup>. Food producers should take part in setting food prices so that they can make enough profit and do away with brokers<sup>313</sup>. In urban planning, it is necessary to discard conventional conceptions of the city as a unified entity in which all inhabitants are expected to have the same lifestyle. Urban planning needs to be sensitive to the cultural and economic specificities of different communities<sup>314</sup>. In general, governments and policy makers should acknowledge that restoring environmental balance is not possible without addressing the drawbacks of the dominant economic system neither can it be done without the political will to implement reforms<sup>315</sup>. The close link between social justice and environmental justice necessitates that decision-makers, activists, experts, and academics all work together to come up with measures that need to be taken in order to achieve both in parallel<sup>316</sup>.

Civil society plays an important role in raising awareness about the relationship between social and environmental justice for both citizens and officials. Special emphasis should be placed on resisting all projects that threaten the environment and widen the gap between segments of the population<sup>317</sup>. The role of civil society is not confined to domestic affairs for it extends across the Global South<sup>318</sup>, where people need to demand their rights whether through protests, strikes, mobilizing public opinion, or communicating with relevant entities<sup>319</sup>. Raising awareness about the environment should be done through organizing sessions on environmental justice and biodiversity<sup>320</sup>. The question that comes to the forefront is whether the accumulation of minor achievements can achieve environmental justice, or no reform is possible without drastic change. Several scholars argue that drastic measures might be necessary to effect a real change in, for example, the issue of biodiversity and related

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<sup>309</sup> Ibrahim Saif. "The Food Price Crisis in the Arab Countries: Short Term Responses to a Lasting Challenge." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/saif\\_food\\_prices\\_final.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/saif_food_prices_final.pdf)

<sup>310</sup> Mishkat Al Mumin. Op. Cit.

<sup>311</sup> Rabei Wahba, Layla Riahi, Ali Aznac. Op. Cit.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Layla Riahi, Ahmed Zaazaa, Nadine Bekdache. Op. Cit.

<sup>315</sup> Rabei Wahba, Amani Al Baedi, Ali Al Karkhi, and Salman Khairallah. Op. Cit.

<sup>316</sup> Reem Abdel Halim, Nissaf Brahimi, and Ali Saheb. Op. Cit.

<sup>317</sup> Rabei Wahba, Layla Riahi, Ali Aznac. Op. Cit.

<sup>318</sup> "Why biodiversity matters": <https://news.asu.edu/20190506-global-engagement-why-biodiversity-matters>

<sup>319</sup> "Industrial development between economy and the environment [Arabic]." Op. Cit.

<sup>320</sup> Rajaa Kassab, Magda Bou Dagher-Kharrat, and Ziad Khaled. Op. Cit.

issues<sup>321</sup>. The role of media outlets cannot be overlooked since it is through them that the importance of biodiversity and environmental justice can be promoted. The same applies to social networking websites<sup>322</sup>. These efforts are expected to lead to a substantial change in people's behavior towards the environment and this will only happen when they receive the knowledge of which they have always been deprived<sup>323</sup>. It is noteworthy that culture does not only change through awareness campaigns, for awareness materializes through practice, and both need to be done in parallel<sup>324</sup>.

On the regional level, the political discourse across the Arab world needs to change in order to set the principles of a new economy that is based on transparency, justice, and democracy. This can be done through people's participation in the decision-making process, new laws and legislations that criminalize environmental violations, a tax system that does not offer exemptions to practices that harm the environment, and the restructuring of relevant institutions<sup>325</sup>. The region needs a major shift in dealing with economic and environmental models, adopting the green recovery plan, understanding environmental sustainability, and resisting current consumption models<sup>326</sup>. Regarding food sovereignty, it is important to revise the current agricultural plan in the region and adopt alternative approaches that are based on diversity, coping with climate change, and channeling agricultural production towards local consumption<sup>327</sup>. One of the challenges is the relationship between environmental issues and the Arabic language. This is because exporting terminology from other parts of the worlds is not enough if relevant terms do not become part of our reality<sup>328</sup>.

Forging regional alliances would help improve conditions on the domestic level as well as create leverage for the region internationally. Through these alliances, the Arab region can develop a discourse, which would become part of the Global South discourse, about the relationship between climate change and the environment on one hand and the economy on the other hand. Such a discourse will only be possible through establishing domestic bases that champion the cause in each country<sup>329</sup>. Climate change is a crisis that requires immediate intervention, and this can be done through examining the approaches adopted by several environmental movements around the world as well as some politicians and parties<sup>330</sup>. One of the successful experiences that aim at resisting the hegemony of global capitalism is the North African Network for Food Sovereignty, which includes organizations, unions, and social movements that oppose capitalism and all practices that destroy the environment. The network works on establishing ties with entities that struggle for food sovereignty on the regional, continental, and international levels<sup>331</sup>.

On the international level, the Arab region needs to resist the exploitation of Western countries. When discussing the shift to green energy, it is important to look for an alternative to capitalism. Developing resistance on the international level requires examining the

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<sup>321</sup> "Why biodiversity matters." Op. Cit.

<sup>322</sup> Rajaa Kassab, Magda Bou Dagher-Kharrat, and Ziad Khaled. Op. Cit.

<sup>323</sup> "Why biodiversity matters." Op. Cit.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> "Different paths to Justice: The case of economy and the environment [Arabic]." Op. Cit.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Rabei Wahba, Layla Riahi, Ali Aznac. Op. Cit.

<sup>328</sup> Hamza Hamouchene and Mika Minio-Paluello. Op. Cit.

<sup>329</sup> "Different paths to Justice: The case of economy and the environment." Op. Cit.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> North African Network for Food Sovereignty. Op. Cit.



relationship between the North and the South, that is imperialist relations based in the exploitation of natural resources, and creating a discourse that takes into consideration the local specificity of Arab countries<sup>332</sup>. It is important in this context to resist the exploitation, monopoly, and environmental abuse that resulted from imperialist policies over several decades<sup>333</sup>. It is also important in this regard to revise agreements Western countries impose on the South and their effect on development and the social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental rights of citizens. This needs to be done before starting negotiations on any new bilateral agreements<sup>334</sup>. Activists and researchers in the South need to seize every possible opportunity to highlight violations committed against the environment in the Arab region<sup>335</sup>. In addition to direct confrontation and different modes of resistance, alliances and joint work are also important since the whole world is suffering from the repercussions of climate change not only the South, which is shown in the case of natural disasters. That is why cooperation between the North and the South is also necessary to work together on facing environmental crises<sup>336</sup>. An example of such cooperation is the signing in 1992 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, a legally binding agreement comprised of three equally significant goals: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair distribution of the benefits of genetic resources. The convention reflected the need to stop taking biodiversity for granted and come up with the means that guarantee the continuation of life on earth<sup>337</sup>. While raising awareness and spreading knowledge about climate justice are important, they are not enough to effect a real change. This is because cooperation between individuals, NGOs, and relevant entities, whether national, regional, or international, and organizing joint campaigns are indispensable steps towards achieving climate justice<sup>338</sup>. All international entities have to be subjected to regular monitoring in order to measure how far their laws and regulations abide by international agreements on climate justice<sup>339</sup>.

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<sup>332</sup> <sup>332</sup> "Different paths to Justice: The case of economy and the environment [Arabic]." Op. Cit.

<sup>333</sup> "Why biodiversity matters." Op. Cit.

<sup>334</sup> Rajaa Kassab, Magda Bou Dagher-Kharrat, and Ziad Khaled. Op. Cit.

<sup>335</sup> "Why biodiversity matters." Op. Cit.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Rajaa Kassab, Magda Bou Dagher-Kharrat, and Ziad Khaled. Op. Cit.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.