

International Protection in the context of the Climate Crisis

Post-Conference Report, December 2025



Refugee
Legal
Support



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Introduction

DLA Piper International, Earth Refuge and Refugee Legal Support hosted the first UK conference on international protection in the context of the climate crisis. This half-day conference addressed the urgent and evolving intersection between displacement across borders, the adverse effects of climate change and disasters, and international protection frameworks.

The conference created a space for leading legal practitioners, academics, organisers, policymakers, and individuals with lived experience to advance legal thinking and practical responses to displacement in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters.

This event was brought about by the increasing readiness of UK practitioners and civil society to reckon with the intersections of climate change and migration, reflecting a growing recognition of the need for meaningful engagement with this rapidly developing field. In this spirit, the conference sought to lead and encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration between legal practitioners, organisations, civil society actors, and policymakers to further the development of this area of law and to uphold and strengthen the rights of those displaced by climate change.



The event was also organised in the context of the launch of the Practical Toolkit on [International Protection for People Displaced across Borders in the Context of Climate Change and Disasters](#) jointly developed by the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, Centre for Gender and Refugee Studies (CGRS) and the University of Essex with the support of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in implementation of the agency's 2020 [Legal Considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters](#).

This report summarises the key findings of the day, and the practical steps underway to carry this work forward and to build on this momentum.

With thanks to our supporting organisations: the Climate and Migration Coalition, Doughty Street Chambers, the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association, the Refugee Law Initiative, and UNHCR.

Opening Remarks

The conference opened with remarks from **Olivia Clark**, Executive Director of Refugee Legal Support (RLS), and **Yumna Kamel**, Executive Director and Co-founder of Earth Refuge. Clark introduced RLS's work supporting refugees in the UK, Northern France and Greece, noting that climate change is increasingly shaping displacement patterns and that recent international guidance confirms refugee and human rights law can apply in climate-related contexts. The key challenge, she emphasised, is how practitioners can use existing legal tools effectively. She also announced the launch of the **UK's first specialist asylum clinic for climate-displaced individuals in January 2026**.

Kamel reflected on the growing recognition of climate displacement, a topic once marginal but now rapidly gaining traction. She stressed the need to centre lived experience and to understand climate displacement as intertwined with wider struggles for justice. Highlighting that this is not solely a Global South issue, she pointed to examples from Norfolk, UK, including displacement caused by coastal erosion and related litigation before the European Court of Human Rights. She concluded by affirming that while the challenge is significant, the legal tools — and the expertise — already exist.

Yumna Kamel



Keynote Speeches

Margaux Bia, Legal Director, DLA Piper International, emphasised the need to move from discussion to strategy in addressing climate-induced displacement. She highlighted that legal responses must go beyond theory and focus on practical measures, applying existing tools in real cases rather than waiting for new frameworks. Bia underscored the urgency of rising climate impacts and called for global collaboration through initiatives such as the [Climate Mobility Database](#).

Bia also pointed to global engagement and innovation, referencing DLA Piper International's involvement in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Proceedings, UN climate negotiations, and initiatives such as the Climate Mobility Database, which aim to strengthen legal responses

worldwide. She warned that fragmented solutions across courts and treaties leave protection patchy, calling for coherent pathways for those displaced by climate change. Her closing message was clear: every organisation and practitioner has a role in building

“Every organisation and practitioner has a role in building capacity, sharing knowledge, and shaping strategies”

capacity, sharing knowledge, and shaping strategies. Collaboration is key to safeguarding the rights of climate-displaced persons.

Harj Narulla, barrister and global expert on climate law at Doughty Street Chambers, discussed his role in the [ICJ Advisory Opinion](#) on climate change, representing the Solomon Islands under instructions from DLA Piper International. The proceedings were unprecedented, involving nearly 100 states and multiple intergovernmental organisations, underscoring the global significance of the issues and the weight of the Court's conclusions.

Although the questions put to the ICJ referenced the Paris Agreement and various human rights treaties, they did not include the Refugee Convention, meaning climate mobility was not central to the case. The Solomon Islands nevertheless advanced two key arguments: that states have obligations under the Paris Agreement to address climate mobility through mitigation, adaptation and financial support, and that some cross-border displacement should fall within refugee protection frameworks, including expanded definitions under the Cartagena Declaration and OAU Convention. These submissions also relied on customary international law and human rights obligations, including non-refoulement where return would endanger life.

The ICJ addressed climate mobility briefly, citing the Teitiota decision: 'In the view of the Court, States have obligations under the principle of non-refoulement where there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of irreparable harm to the right to life in breach of Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) if individuals are returned to their country of origin' (para 378).

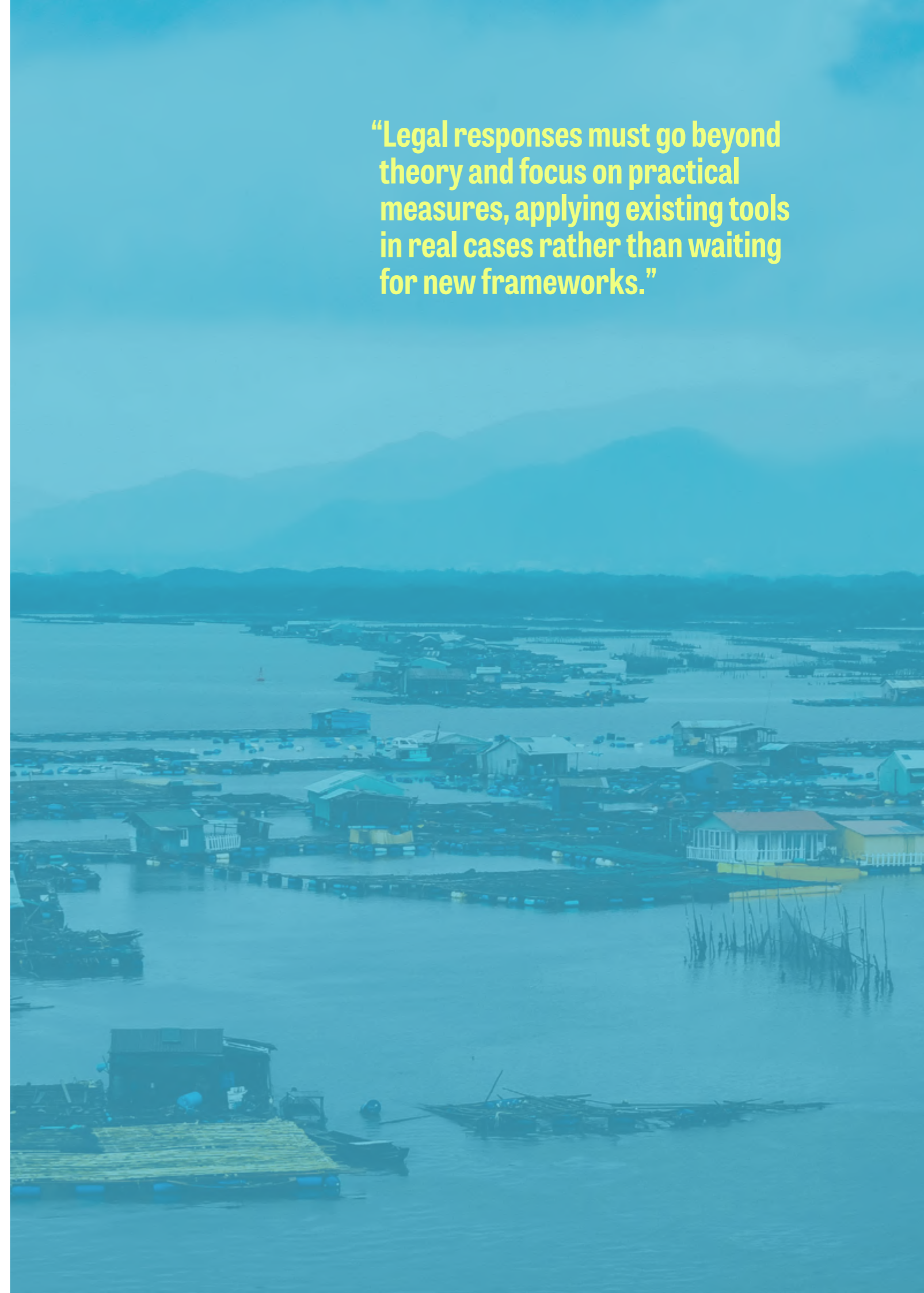
Narulla also highlighted the [Inter-American Court of Human Rights' 2023 Advisory Opinion](#), which recognised duties to prevent forced migration and endorsed tools such as humanitarian visas and granting refugee status as measures to guarantee the protection of those displaced in the context of climate change. Together, these decisions mark an evolving international legal landscape integrating climate displacement into protection regimes.

“These decisions mark an evolving international legal landscape integrating climate displacement into protection regimes.”

Harj Narulla



“Legal responses must go beyond theory and focus on practical measures, applying existing tools in real cases rather than waiting for new frameworks.”



PANEL 1

Setting the scene: a conversation on protection in the era of climate change

Chair: Rebecca Chapman (Garden Court Chambers)

Speakers: Madeline Garlick (UNHCR), Prof. David Cantor (Refugee Law Initiative), Amali Tower (Climate Refugees)

The first panel laid the foundation for understanding climate displacement through legal frameworks, conceptual analysis, and lived experience. It explored how climate change interacts with existing refugee law, the multi-causal nature of displacement, and the urgent need for inclusive and practical responses.

Legal and conceptual foundations

Madeline Garlick, Chief of the Protection Policy and Legal Advice Section (UNHCR), opened by emphasising that international protection frameworks already provide avenues for those displaced by climate impacts. Contrary to the perception that climate displacement falls outside refugee law, Garlick noted that many individuals affected by climate change may meet the refugee definition under the 1951 Refugee Convention. She highlighted that persecution can be linked to climate-related factors, such as when environmental defenders or journalists face threats for their work on climate issues. [UNHCR guidance](#) and case law confirm that refugee law is not static; it can adapt to evolving contexts where climate change intersects

with human rights violations. Please see also two other referenced UNHCR publications [Protection of Persons Displaced Across Borders in the Context of Disasters and the Adverse Effects of Climate Change](#) and [Climate change impacts and cross-border displacement: International refugee law and UNHCR's mandate](#).

Professor David Cantor, founder and director of the Refugee Law Initiative, speaking to the RLI [Declaration and Analytical Paper on International Protection in the context of Disasters and Climate Change](#) expanded on this by examining how disasters-both climate-related and otherwise – can sever a person's relationship with their state or create conditions preventing safe return, thereby triggering refugee law protections. He stressed that climate change acts as a “risk multiplier,” exacerbating the intensity, frequency, and unpredictability of disasters. Cantor underscored the importance of social vulnerability in shaping outcomes, illustrating this with a stark comparison: the 2011 Haiti earthquake caused over 200,000 deaths, while a much stronger earthquake in Chile the same year resulted in fewer than 100 fatalities. The disparity was due to differences in societal resilience, infrastructure, and governance rather than disaster magnitude. This example reinforced the argument that climate displacement cannot be understood solely through environmental factors; social and political contexts are equally critical.

Lived experience and justice

Amali Tower, founder and Executive Director of [Climate Refugees](#), brought the discussion to the human level, sharing insights from interviews with refugees affected by the climate crisis. Refugees rarely cite “climate” explicitly in their claims, yet climate factors often underpin displacement, intertwined with conflict, insecurity, and economic collapse. Tower provided vivid examples: Somali women unable to feed their children after five consecutive failed harvests due to drought, and communities in the [Chad Basin](#) facing compounded crises of climate stress and armed conflict.

Tower also noted that the Global South is leading in legal innovation, referencing frameworks such as the [African Charter on Human Rights](#), the [Kampala Convention](#), and [Colombia's law on internally displaced persons](#). These instruments demonstrate that regional approaches are often more progressive than global frameworks.

Tower also referenced her new publication: [We Just Want a Chance to Stay: stories from Guatemala and the Borderlands on climate and the right to stay](#).

“Refugees rarely cite “climate” explicitly in their claims, yet climate factors often underpin displacement, intertwined with conflict, insecurity, and economic collapse.”



Identified gaps and challenges

There are significant gaps in recognition and response:

- **Recognition by authorities:** Many decision-makers fail to appreciate the multi-causal nature of displacement, focusing narrowly on conflict or economic drivers while overlooking climate as an underlying factor.
- **Inclusion in climate planning:** Refugees and displaced persons are frequently excluded from national climate adaptation plans. While international frameworks and funding mechanisms exist, they are often insufficient to mitigate risks or support resilience.
- **Legal frameworks:** Authorities often neglect region-specific vulnerabilities. UNHCR highlighted concepts such as “[serious public disorder](#)” under The Organisation of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (‘1969 OAU Convention’) as potential grounds for refugee status and noted ongoing research into disaster scenarios to inform future guidance.
- **Operational challenges:** Severe cuts to humanitarian aid have left host countries like Chad underfunded despite rising refugee inflows. This underlines the fragility of current systems and the urgent need for sustainable support.

Future directions

Refugee law alone cannot address all dimensions of climate displacement. Ordinary migration pathways often provide more practical solutions, and most climate-related mobility remains internal, underscoring the need for robust national disaster risk management and adaptation strategies. The discussion concluded with a call to action: to integrate climate considerations into legal practice, policy frameworks, and humanitarian planning, ensuring that those displaced by climate impacts receive protection and dignity.

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PANEL 2 The role of climate change in UK immigration and human rights practice

Chair: Ubah Dirie (Garden Court Chambers)

Speakers: Professor Geoff Gilbert (University of Essex), Ronan Toal (Garden Court Chambers), Krishnendu Mukherjee (Doughty Street Chambers)

The panel examined how climate change intersects with UK immigration and human rights law, offering practical guidance for practitioners and highlighting emerging jurisprudence and case studies.

Presentation on the Practical Toolkit for Practitioners

Professor Geoff Gilbert introduced the [International Protection for People Displaced Across Borders in the Context of Climate Change and Disasters: A Practical Toolkit](#), which was produced to assist legal professionals in framing claims involving climate displacement. He outlined five key considerations:

- There are no bespoke rules for climate displacement; each case must be assessed on its facts;
- Claims should consider the entire “hazard-scape”, recognising multiple drivers such as drought, conflict, and livelihood loss;
- Individual vulnerability matters — age, gender, health, and political status can shape risk;
- Human agency plays a role; disasters often result from governance failures or discrimination; and
- Risk evolves over time; conditions may deteriorate, affecting protection needs.

These principles apply within the [1951 Refugee Convention](#) framework and human rights law. Gilbert referenced the [Human Rights Committee’s General Comment 36](#), which recognises climate change as a threat to the right to life, and the [Teitiota v New Zealand](#) case, where the UN Human Rights Committee found it is unlawful for governments to return people to countries where climate change impacts expose them to life-threatening risks or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.



He also cited [the ICJ Advisory Opinion](#) (July 2025) as a milestone and emphasised that a [summary blog](#) written by Professor Jane McAdam is a key resource to understanding the ICJ advisory opinion in the context of climate displacement. Case law examples included [RN \(Returners\) Zimbabwe](#), where exclusion from food assistance during drought amounted to persecution, and [Sufi and Elmi v UK](#), where drought and conflict triggered Article 3 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) protections. Gilbert stressed that UK practitioners should adapt the toolkit for domestic use, as resolving cases in national tribunals is often more effective than pursuing international litigation.

Ronan Toal, author and barrister at the Garden Court Chambers, spoke to his [Advice on Protection and Human Rights Claim made in Reliance on the Adverse Effects of Climate Change](#), emphasising that climate change, caused by human activity, can amount to persecution and human rights violations. Toal explained that climate impacts such as food insecurity, heat stress, and livelihood loss may breach Article 3 ECHR (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) when linked to human action. Case law illustrates this distinction: [Bouyid v Belgium](#) confirmed that degrading treatment involves intentional acts, while [N v UK](#) found no breach where harm stemmed from natural illness. In climate cases, the human-driven nature of environmental harm strengthens [Article 3](#) claims. Toal also discussed [Article 8 ECHR](#) (right to private and family life), noting that expulsion decisions should weigh climate-related hardship, historic responsibility, and international law principles. Practitioners were advised to prioritise human rights arguments under Articles 3 and 8 before turning to refugee law.

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Krishnendu Mukherjee, barrister at Doughty Street Chambers, provided a case study from the Indian Sundarbans, where rising sea levels submerged an island, displacing 10,000 people — one of the earliest recognised instances of “climate refugees”. This case study was part of a joint [Climate Justice Project](#), in collaboration with Doughty Street Chambers, King’s College London, and the National University of Juridical Sciences (Calcutta). The focus of the project was to examine how transnational soft law remedies may be used to hold to account those responsible for climate damage. Mukherjee also highlighted the human cost of climate change, sharing stories of displaced individuals facing exploitative labour and social harms. He stressed the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility”, noting that those least responsible for emissions bear the greatest burden. The discussion extended to corporate accountability: banks and corporations financing carbon-intensive industries have duties under the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) to mitigate harm and provide remedies. Mukherjee called for grievance mechanisms enabling affected communities to demand adaptation funding and for recognition of climate change as a driver of forced labour and exploitation.

The panel underscored that climate-related claims require a multi-layered approach, combining refugee law, human rights protections and strategic litigation as well as other soft law remedies. Practitioners must be proactive in eliciting climate-related factors from clients, as these are often embedded in broader narratives of conflict and poverty. The discussion concluded with a call for systemic legal responses, stronger corporate accountability, and integration of climate considerations into immigration and human rights practice.

“Climate-related claims require a multi-layered approach, combining refugee law, human rights protections, and strategic litigation.”

“Legal practitioners and advocates are responding to the growing challenge of climate displacement through litigation, strategic advocacy, and innovative tools.”

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PANEL 3

Legal strategies and insights on climate displacement litigation from around the world

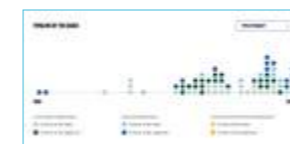
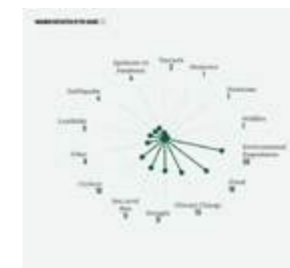
Speakers: Yumna Kamel (Earth Refuge), Matt Scott (Raoul Wallenberg Institute), Bella Mosselmans & Laura Karan (Global Strategic Litigation Council)

This panel provided an in-depth exploration of how legal practitioners and advocates are responding to the growing challenge of climate displacement through litigation, strategic advocacy, and innovative tools. It highlighted the importance of reframing existing jurisprudence, developing new rights-based concepts, and integrating advocacy with legal practice to strengthen protection for those displaced by climate impacts.

Legal tools and case studies

Yumna Kamel introduced the [Climate Mobility Case Database](#), a pioneering initiative that catalogues and reframes existing legal decisions as climate mobility cases. The database includes numerous cases on cross-border and internal movement that feature elements of climate or environmental change and invites contributions from practitioners worldwide to expand its scope. This resource demonstrates that climate-related displacement is already embedded within legal systems, even if not explicitly recognised as such. By reframing cases through a climate lens, the database helps practitioners identify legal arguments and precedents that can be adapted for future litigation.

Kamel shared examples from Italy, where courts have acknowledged the link between climate disasters and socio-economic vulnerability, and from Bangladesh and Nigeria, where cases have established legal grounds for subsidiary protection in cases against the Minister of Interior (see: [Bangladeshi applicant](#), and [Nigerian applicant](#)). These cases illustrate how climate impacts intersect with traditional refugee law criteria, such as risk of persecution and inability to return safely. This approach challenges the misconception that climate displacement falls outside existing legal frameworks and underscores the adaptability of refugee law when interpreted in light of contemporary realities.



Dr Matthew Scott, Associate Professor at Lund University and lead of the Human Rights and Environment thematic area at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights, reinforced this point by arguing that climate itself is not the persecutor; successful claims must demonstrate human agency behind harm. He described climate impacts as part of a “political ecology,” shaped by governance failures, social structures, and political decisions. Scott cited a [New Zealand case](#) where a humanitarian activist’s political opinion expressed after a disaster became the basis for persecution, showing how climate-related events can intersect with protected grounds under refugee law. This framing is critical for practitioners seeking to link environmental harm to human responsibility, thereby satisfying the legal tests for persecution.

Strategic litigation and advocacy

Bella Mosselmans, Director of the Global Strategic Litigation Council (the Council), highlighted the growing need for cross-border knowledge sharing, particularly as governments increasingly coordinate restrictive migration policies. She stressed the importance of intersecting legal frameworks, citing an [Italian case](#) where climate displacement heightened the applicant’s vulnerability to trafficking if returned to Bangladesh. This example demonstrates how climate-related vulnerability can compound other risks, strengthening claims under refugee and human rights law.

Laura Karan, Strategic Advocacy and Fundraising Lead at the Council, described how advocacy workstreams complement litigation by amplifying migrant voices through media engagement. The Council’s press strategy connects journalists with migrants to tell stories in accessible, impactful ways, aiming to influence public opinion and policy. Karan added that advocacy must “unlock” law by translating complex legal concepts into plain language so communities can understand and use them. She also promoted creative approaches, such as arts and culture, to build emotional connection and public engagement.

Tools and emerging legal concepts

Kamel flagged that Earth Refuge and the Council, in collaboration with Caribbean civil society leaders, are working together to develop a toolkit to interpret and apply the Inter-American Court and ICJ advisory opinions on climate displacement. This resource will enable local advocates to use international legal principles in domestic contexts, bridging the gap between global norms and local implementation. It reflects a growing trend of empowering grassroots actors to engage with international law and influence national policy.

Scott introduced the emerging concept of the “right not to be forcibly displaced.” He referenced the case of [Daniel Billy and others v Australia](#) (Torres Strait Islanders’ petition), which argued that climate-induced displacement violates fundamental rights, including cultural integrity and the right to family life. This case exemplifies how attribution science and human rights law are converging to create new legal pathways for climate justice. Advances in attribution studies, which link specific climate events to anthropogenic emissions, may strengthen claims by demonstrating causation and state responsibility.

Key takeaways

While climate displacement presents complex challenges, the tools to address it — legal, advocacy, and scientific — are already emerging. The task ahead is to mobilise these resources effectively, ensuring that those displaced by climate impacts receive protection and dignity under international and domestic law.



“The experts drew attention to essential resources, including from climate science, research linking climate change and human rights violations, and the climate v conflict nexus.”

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PANEL 4

Evidencing climate change in international protection claims

Chair: Emily Rowe (Refugee Legal Support)

Speakers: Dr David Ngira (Amnesty International), Tareq Hassan (Sustainable Development Network, Canada), Adam Jones (independent solicitor), Finnian Clark (barrister, Doughty Street Chambers)

This session explored the challenges faced in evidencing a protection claim where climate forms part of the risk. The experts drew attention to essential resources, including from climate science, research linking climate change and human rights violations, and the climate v conflict nexus. The session also offered guidance on best practices in strengthening climate-related evidence including eliciting pertinent witness testimony and drafting instructions for experts.



Dr David Ngira, Eastern Africa and Great Lakes Region Researcher at Amnesty International, spoke to his report: [Somalia: No rain, no food, no animals: The human rights impact of drought and displacement in Somalia](#). This research focuses on displacement in southern and central Somalia between 2020 and 2023, when the country experienced a four-year-long drought. The report highlights Somalia’s political and economic context, showing how protracted civil war and economic challenges have led to poverty and exposed people to climate shocks. Using attribution science, the report explains how climate change affected the long and short rains and worsened the drought, resulting in drying of rivers and displacement. Failures by the government of Somalia to protect affected people in turn resulted in the violations of human rights, particularly the right to food, water, health and life.

Tareq Hassan, climate change and sustainable development advisor from Yemen, highlighted Yemen’s climate-conflict nexus. He noted that the conflict in Yemen since 2015 has destroyed infrastructure and fragmented governance, making reliable data on climate impacts and displacement difficult to obtain. Environmental degradation and extreme weather are worsening an already severe humanitarian crisis.

Displacement is driven by the combined effects of conflict and climate change, with water scarcity and competition over resources exacerbating tensions. Since 2015, around 4.5 million people have been internally displaced, with an estimated 13.9 per cent linked directly to climate

impacts (UNHCR). Yemen is experiencing droughts, floods, storms, rising temperatures, sea level rise and chronic water shortages.

Around 70 per cent of Yemenis report experiencing climate impacts in their daily lives, and half report exposure to resource conflict and pollution. Many communities lack early warning systems, increasing vulnerability to extreme events. Despite this, climate resilience, adaptation measures and the integration of climate risks into peacebuilding and development remain limited.

Adam Jones, spoke to the checklists and sample instructions included in his [proposal for International Protection Claims with a Climate Dimension](#). He emphasised that when taking instructions, there is a need to look at underlying causes of vulnerability to harm, not just the immediate risk, and so one should ask about community experiences and what the elders discussed, also taking into account the differences in self-expression between individualistic and collectivist societies. He highlighted how climate change should be treated as a risk multiplier and integrated holistically into claims, rather than be treated as a

standalone environmental issue, as it intensifies harm, deepens inequalities and destabilises social cohesion. He referenced the [2025 IDMC Global Report](#), which recorded 45.8 million people displaced by disasters in 2024, with 9.8 million still displaced at year's end, noting the growing overlap between conflict and


disaster displacement. Jones illustrated how climate factors compound vulnerabilities, citing examples such as resource conflicts in Chad, health risks linked to pollution and increased exposure to trafficking and modern slavery in India, the latter drawing parallels with existing case law such [HD \(Trafficked women\) Nigeria \(CG\) \[2016\] UKUT 454 \(IAC\)](#).

Finnian Clark, a barrister at Doughty Street Chambers, emphasised the growing importance of expert evidence in climate-related immigration cases, particularly the timing and sequencing of country reports and mental health assessments. He cited a Malian case where evidence of cyclical flood-drought patterns informed psychiatric evaluations of how the client would cope if displaced again. Clark highlighted the relevance of Articles 2 and 3 of the ECHR in the context of climate harm. He noted that the ICJ advisory opinion recognises that climate impacts can threaten the right to life. He further argued that where climate change and conflict

“Climate change should be treated as a risk multiplier and integrated holistically into claims, rather than be treated as a standalone environmental issue, as it intensifies harm, deepens inequalities and destabilises social cohesion.”

cause serious material deprivation, the threshold under Article 3 may be met without requiring exceptional individual circumstances. This approach reflects the reasoning in [Sufi and Elmi v UK](#), where severe humanitarian conditions, although arising from man-made causes, were found capable of engaging Article 3. Advances in attribution science could strengthen claims by pinpointing anthropogenic causes of disasters, potentially leading to more generous legal standards and even differentiated tests for refugees impacted by high-emitting countries. He called for incremental development of climate arguments in legal language, expert reports and court decisions, stressing that these arguments should complement conventional asylum claims rather than stand alone, building towards a more nuanced and integrated approach to climate and refugee law.





“The panel explored how climate justice and migrant justice intersect across policy and law, emphasising the need to integrate lived experience into advocacy and decision-making.”

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PANEL 5

Policy intersections of climate and migrant justice

Chair: Famida Miah (Climate Outreach)

Speakers: Yazan Miri (Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, JCWI); Dr. Nausheen Anwar (International Institute for Environment and Development, IIED); Alex Randall (Climate Outreach); Joy Reyes (Grantham Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, Manila Observatory)

The panel explored how climate justice and migrant justice intersect across policy and law, emphasising the need to integrate lived experience into advocacy and decision-making.

Yazan Miri shared insights from JCWI's climate justice project, which brings perspectives from the Global South into UK migration policy debates. The project examines how climate change affects mobility within visa systems and refugee protection, while a steering committee of people with lived experience guides its work. JCWI is mapping global climate-migration policies to identify models for UK adoption and collaborates with civil society and private sector actors to challenge harmful practices.

Dr Nausheen Anwar highlighted the dynamics of urban climate injustice in African and Asian cities, drawing particularly on research from Karachi, Pakistan. She described the dissonance between municipal policy and action, where disaster risk mitigation efforts often produce new harms, including state removals of settlements that provide essential housing. Despite the 2022 floods in Pakistan, which displaced 33 million people, Karachi has seen no meaningful planning to reduce future risk, revealing a disconnect between progressive national laws on paper and the violence experienced locally. Anwar noted emerging debates on a Climate Refugee

Bill to address the challenges faced by climate-affected populations, although she stressed that the crisis ultimately centres on housing. Drawing on her contribution to the upcoming [2027 IPCC](#)

[report on cities and climate change](#), she concluded that meaningful intervention must begin at the local level, where climate displacement is most directly produced and contested.

“Meaningful intervention must begin at the local level, where climate displacement is most directly produced and contested.”

Joy Reyes contrasted approaches to climate and migrant justice in the Philippines and the UK, noting that these are deeply interconnected struggles grounded in rights, accountability and community-led responses.

In the Philippines, climate impacts are immediate and visceral, as seen in cases such as the [Shell litigation](#), where climate harm is an everyday reality and migration becomes a strategy of survival. Reyes highlighted that adaptation, loss and damage and reparations are central concerns, reflected in the proposed Climate Bill before the House of Representatives, which would channel funds from polluting corporations toward community recovery. In the UK, the focus is on policy advocacy, legal accountability and recognising the country's international responsibilities. Reyes stressed the need for the UK to acknowledge its historical contribution to global emissions and to ensure that people displaced by climate harm are treated with dignity within existing frameworks, especially given enduring colonial and racial dynamics.

Across both contexts, Reyes underscored that the language of justice is essential, emphasised that climate justice cannot be separated from migrant justice, and called for stronger transnational solidarity to secure equitable, rights-based outcomes for affected communities.

Alex Randall of Climate Outreach brought the discussion back to the UK context by examining prevailing British narratives around climate change and migration and urging the need to centre justice in public engagement. He noted that public opinion on both issues has eroded in recent years, making advocacy more difficult and heightening the importance of developing stories that help people reconnect with the human realities of climate displacement. Randall stressed that powerful lived experience must be at the forefront, and that arts and culture offer vital tools for communicating in ways that resonate beyond conventional policy messaging. He also warned of the risks posed when organisations focus narrowly on single issues, which can lead to migrants being rhetorically “thrown under the bus” as climate narratives are simplified or weaponised. For Randall, building public understanding requires approaches that are relational, culturally grounded and rooted in justice, ensuring that climate and migration are framed not as competing concerns but as intertwined human struggles.

Conclusion

The conference closed with a strong sense of momentum and collective readiness.

Speakers underscored that climate-related displacement is already reshaping protection needs and that the field has entered a moment of rapid legal development. Recent decisions from the International Court of Justice and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, along with pending legislation in Colombia, the Philippines and Pakistan, show that states and institutions are beginning to take climate mobility seriously. This shift also reflects a broader need for creativity that reaches beyond traditional actors, recognising that responsibility and solutions may lie not only with states but also with financial and corporate actors.

“A central message of the day was the importance of collaboration across sectors.”

A central message of the day was the importance of collaboration across sectors. Lawyers cannot work in isolation, particularly in such a politicised landscape. Progress depends on partnerships with scientists, researchers,

community advocates, artists and communicators. Participants emphasised that lived experience must guide all work, since excluding affected communities has consistently failed and removes the human core from an inherently human problem.

The event closed with two clear calls to action:

— Climate mobility case database

All practitioners are encouraged to submit relevant decisions to the [Climate Mobility Case Database](#) to make resources more accessible;

— UK toolkit

A group of UK lawyers will begin work on adapting the international climate mobility toolkit for use in domestic proceedings. Please join this group if you are interested! Email olivia.clark@refugeelegalsupport.org

Contact details for parties interested in this work



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