

Climate-Induced Migration to the EU: Legal Protection Gaps and the Role of Media Narratives

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Abstract— Climate change, along with political persecution, military conflicts, and poor socio-economic conditions, is one of the key drivers of forced migration. This issue has become increasingly relevant, especially in light of rising global temperatures, storms, droughts, sea-level rise, and resource depletion. However, international law currently offers limited protection for climate-displaced persons. This paper has three main objectives: first, to examine the current state of immigration in the European Union (EU) by analyzing official Eurostat secondary data; second, to identify gaps in migration and environmental law; and third, to examine the dominant media narratives surrounding climate-induced migration and the ways in which they shape public understanding and decision-making related to this phenomenon. By doing so, it aims to formulate specific, comprehensive, rights-based recommendations to address the humanitarian and legal challenges of climate-induced migration, while also promoting more accurate, responsible and contextualized media coverage of the phenomenon.

Keywords— Climate Change, Migration, European Union, Legal Framework, Media Narratives

I. INTRODUCTION

Climate change and related natural disasters, such as rising landscape and sea temperatures, intensified storms, and prolonged droughts, represent a key global challenge, as they lead to negative socio-economic effects, among which are a lack of essential resources, poverty, and health risks. These security shortcomings collectively force millions of individuals to flee their countries of origin in search of a better life. This is evidenced by a United Nations (UN) publication that argues that, in 2024, 45.8 million people were displaced due to weather-related disasters [1]. Notably, the publication adds that the majority of displaced populations originate from states that are among the most vulnerable and least equipped to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. Similar observations are indicated in the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's [2] report on Global Internal Displacement, according to which, as of the end of 2023,

7.7 million people had been displaced by disasters worldwide.

Although climate change is often framed as a future concern, its impacts are already palpable and increasingly devastating. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) emphasizes that climate change negatively impacts societies in many different ways – from harming food production and human health, through the widening spread of disease and death, damaging ecosystems and infrastructure, to reducing the overall productivity of the economy [3]. Furthermore, despite clear evidence that climate change affects human mobility, the media and policymakers' narrow focus on defining "climate refugees" oversimplifies the issue and risks overlooking its broader complexity, as stated by the UN International Organization for Migration [4]. Additionally, this source considers that the distinction between "climate migrants" and "climate refugees" is crucial, as the current international legal framework does not explicitly recognize climate migrants as refugees, thereby leaving many without formal protection and creating a significant legal gap.

Historically, the recognition of the relationship between environmental protection and human welfare progressed following the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm [5]. The Stockholm Declaration established the fundamental principles that have shaped subsequent environmental governance and highlighted the human dimension of environmental degradation. Despite this progress, the legal and policy frameworks established since then have not kept pace with the rapidly increasing incidence of climate-induced displacement.

Furthermore, despite the evident scale of climate-induced displacement, the existing international legal framework inadequately addresses the rights and protections of those forced to move due to environmental reasons. Unlike other categories of forced displacement, such as refugees who are fleeing political persecution or armed conflict, individuals displaced by climate change

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lack a clearly defined legal status and corresponding protections under international law. This legislative void exposes climate migrants to heightened vulnerabilities and legal precarity, underscoring the urgent need for a comprehensive legal framework that recognizes and safeguards their rights.

In addition to legal and policy dimensions, climate-induced migration is shaped by media discourse. Journalistic framing influences how displaced populations are represented, that is, as victims, threats, or rights-bearing subjects, thereby affecting public understanding and political responses. Media narratives thus function as a critical intermediary between environmental realities, legal debates and governance outcomes.

Understanding the nuances of this relationship, the corresponding legal frameworks and the role of media representations is crucial to address the vulnerabilities of climate-affected populations. In this regard, this paper seeks to critically examine gaps in the international legal framework relating to climate-forced migration, while also considering how media narratives shape public understandings of these gaps. By analyzing contemporary climate change impacts on migration patterns to the EU, relevant legal perspectives and dominant media framings, this study aims to formulate specific recommendations to enhance both the protection and support mechanisms for climate migrants and the quality of public discourse surrounding climate-induced mobility, thereby contributing to more just and effective global governance in the face of environmental displacement.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study applies a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative analysis of secondary migration data with qualitative legal and policy analysis. The aim is to examine patterns of climate-induced migration towards the EU and to evaluate the adequacy of existing legal frameworks addressing such movements. This approach allows the study to combine statistical trends with legal and contextual analysis for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Empirical data, primarily focused on the period between 2020-2025, was obtained from official sources, including Eurostat, the United Nations, the UNHCR, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Germanwatch Climate Risk Index. This part of the analysis focuses on identifying immigration trends of non-EU citizens and assessing potential links between environmental stressors and migration dynamics. The quantitative analysis identifies general patterns but does not establish direct causality.

The legal analysis followed a comparative approach, examining international and regional initiatives such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, as well as relevant human rights treaties and recent bilateral treaties. Soft law initiatives, including the Sendai Framework, the Nansen Initiative, and the Paris Agreement, were also considered. Case law from the International Court of Justice, the Inter-American Court of

Human Rights, and the European Court of Human Rights was also reviewed to identify emerging interpretations relevant to climate displacement. The Australia–Tuvalu Falepili Union Treaty was identified as a contemporary example of best practice in this area. In general, this analysis helps evaluate how legal frameworks address climate-induced migration in practice.

To complement the quantitative migration data and the comparative legal analysis, the study incorporates a literature-based examination of media narratives related to climate induced migration. This analysis is supplemented by illustrative examples from prominent European news outlets published between 2020 and 2025, in order to identify dominant framing patterns, terminological choices, sourcing practices, and strategies of contextualization as well as to assess the extent to which legal and human rights dimensions are reflected in public discourse. This qualitative analysis focuses on identifying common patterns rather than producing generalizable results.

The research is grounded in a rights-based framework that links climate justice, migration governance, and the protection of human rights. Although limited by the absence of a universal definition of “climate migrant” and reliance on secondary data, the study mitigates these constraints through triangulation of multiple sources and critical cross-comparison of empirical, legal and media-based evidence. Among of the key limitations of the selected methodological approach include reliance on secondary data, and predominantly interpretative nature of the qualitative analysis. The absence of primary data (e.g., interviews) may also limit insight into lived experiences. Despite this, the mixed-methods approach strengthens the overall analysis through triangulation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Climate change, alongside military conflicts, political instability, and socio-economic inequalities, is one of the key factors forcing people to migrate, often involuntarily. The multifaceted repercussions of rising global surface and ocean temperatures (see Figure 1) extend far beyond environmental degradation, encompassing profound natural, social, economic, and territorial implications. These consequences increasingly contribute to displacement, rendering climate change not merely an environmental crisis, but a catalyst for humanitarian emergencies.

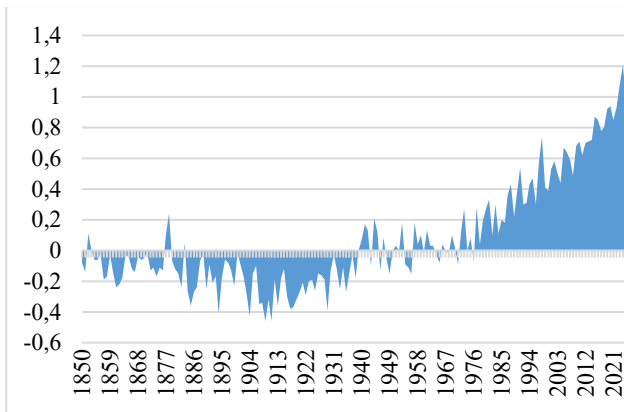


Fig. 1. Example of a figure caption. (Source: National Centers for Environmental Information, 2025)

The above figure shows a worrying climatological trend: a pronounced and sustained rise in the global average temperature since the beginning of the 21st century, particularly in comparison to the 1901–2000 baseline period. This marked deviation from historical temperature norms underscores the accelerating pace of anthropogenic climate change and signals the intensification of its associated impacts across both natural and human systems.

Among the most commonly observed manifestations of climate-induced stressors that cause human displacement are a significant reduction in the availability of potable freshwater resources, the forced migration or extinction of animal species, and a substantial rise in sea levels, which exacerbates the risk of coastal flooding and shoreline erosion. Moreover, the health-related consequences of climatic shifts, manifested in declining population health and increased occupational hazards, directly impact labor force availability and productivity, particularly in climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and construction. Infrastructure in vulnerable regions is frequently ill-equipped to withstand extreme weather events, further compounding the exposure of local populations to risk. Substantial declines in agricultural output, due in part to shifting precipitation patterns and increased incidences of drought and soil salinization, reduce the arability of land and diminish food security, thereby undermining the viability of traditional livelihoods and accelerating migratory pressures [6].

As environmental conditions deteriorate in many regions, resulting in resource scarcity, extreme weather events, and reduced habitability, people are increasingly compelled to seek better conditions in areas with more favorable climatic and socio-economic conditions. In this regard, the EU, which is usually associated with a relatively stable climate and high living standards, is a key destination for climate-induced migration. Figure 2 shows the total number of immigrants whose country of origin is not an EU Member State for the period 2020–2023.

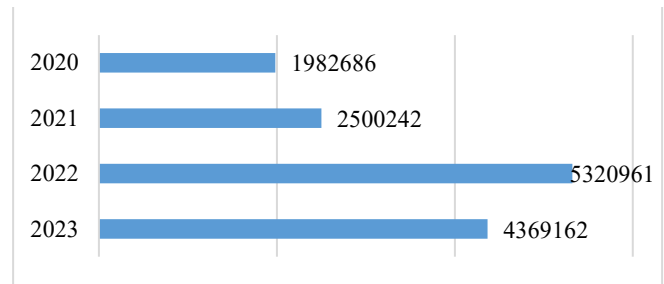


Fig. 2. Number of immigrants from non-EU countries (Source: Eurostat [7])

As can be seen from the data presented in Figure 2, there has been a marked increase in the inflow of migrants into the EU between 2020 and 2023. Notably, the data indicate a sharp peak in 2022, which can be primarily attributed to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This armed conflict has triggered a substantial and rapid displacement of Ukrainian citizens, many of whom have been granted temporary protection within the EU. However, it is important to note that this surge in immigration to the EU cannot be attributed to climate change; rather, it is a consequence of geopolitical instability and armed conflict, thereby falling under the broader category of conflict-induced displacement.

To more accurately assess trends related to environmentally forced displacement, it is essential to distinguish such movements from those triggered by military conflicts or political persecution. In this regard, further insight can be gained by analyzing the countries of origin of the nationalities most frequently represented among immigrants in the EU (see Figure 3). Such an examination provides a clearer picture of the extent to which climate-related events are driving migration towards the EU.

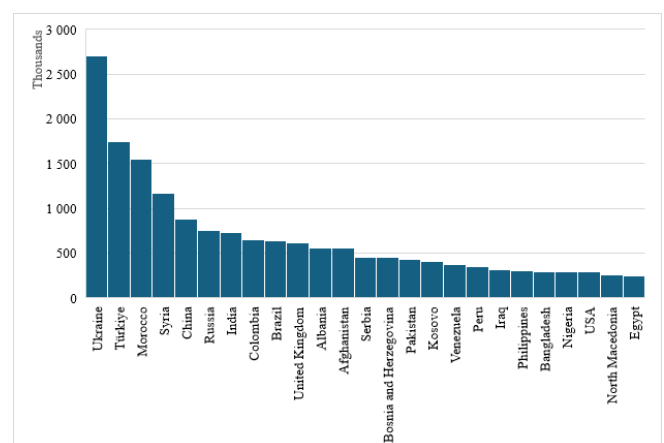


Fig. 3. Top nationalities of non-EU citizens that are usual residents in the EU as of 1 January 2024 (Source: Eurostat [8])

As illustrated in Figure 3, a predominant part of immigrants in the EU do not originate from countries that are most frequently affected by climate-related disasters. However, according to the Germanwatch [9] Climate Risk

Index (CRI), the major non-EU countries that feature the top 10 list of states most severely impacted by such disasters are China, India, and the Philippines. The CRI is a reliable and useful tool for such studies as its methodology evaluates the impact of extreme weather events, by incorporating indicators such as economic losses, mortality rates, and the number of people affected. From an economic perspective, climate-related disasters such as droughts, floods, heatwaves, storms, and wildfires resulted in estimated financial losses of approximately USD 44 billion in China, USD 20 billion in India, and USD 2.3 billion in the Philippines between 1993 and 2022.

Moreover, these three countries are not generally considered politically unstable, nor are they characterized by widespread civil conflict. This assessment is supported by the relatively low number of people forcibly displaced from these countries who seek asylum in Europe [10]. Consequently, it could be speculated that part of the nearly 900,000 Chinese, over 700,000 Indian, and approximately 300,000 Filipino residents in the EU may have immigrated for reasons directly or indirectly linked to climate change. These findings highlight the growing importance of addressing the legal status and protection gaps faced by individuals migrating due to environmental and climate-related factors – a topic that will be examined in greater detail in the following subsection.

A. Legal aspects of climate forced migration

The legal concept of ‘refugee’, to which their rights and protections are inextricably linked, stems from the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, and their status from the 1967 New York Protocol. The definition adopted therein establishes a link between the refugee status and a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (Article 1(A)(2) of the UN Refugee Convention). This provision is, therefore, not directly applicable to ‘climate refugees’ [11], as the Convention was designed in the wake of the Second World War to define states’ obligations towards affected individuals. The possibility of people later being pressured to leave their home due to climate change (and the corresponding duties of other states towards these individuals) was not one of the foreseeable concerns of the Convention’s drafters.

However, the concept of ‘environmental refugees’ is not new. It has already been defined as “those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life. By ‘environmental disruption’ in this definition is meant any physical, chemical and/or biological changes in the ecosystem (or the resource base) that render it, temporarily or permanently, unsuitable to support human life.” [12]. Nevertheless, this is not a recognised category of refugees or even migrants for any legal purpose [13].

The legal response to this phenomenon is lacking at the moment; and it is also unlikely that an international treaty or protocol will be drafted in the near future. Firstly,

because the current historical moment is fraught with resistance to the acceptance of migrants (particularly in the Global North) – therefore, a new treaty establishing state obligations towards another category of refugees would be too contentious. Secondly, there is also no consensus on the legal response to be adopted: while some advocate the adoption of a treaty or additional protocol [14], others argue that adopting such a (misleading) concept would be a mistaken endeavor [15][16]. Nevertheless, some regional attempts have successfully established future responses to population displacement caused by climate change (such as in Pakistan and Australia).

As the effects of climate change worsen, new challenges and obstacles may arise in the adoption of a legal framework governing migration agreements. For example, if the entirety of a state’s territory becomes submerged and disappears, this could present a significant challenge. This issue is linked to the continuity or loss of sovereignty (as recognized in the recent International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion of 23 July 2025, para. 357), as the validity of an international treaty would require the sovereign power of all signatories. While some may still advocate that sovereignty requires a corresponding (land) territory over which to exert sovereign power – in a strict application of the Montevideo criteria –, a more nuanced approach allows for maintenance of sovereignty despite the disappearance of the physical territory. To deem otherwise would overburden small states (usually islands) with the consequences of a situation to which they contributed the least [17]. This is also the opinion of the ICJ, who stated that “once a State is established, the disappearance of one of its constituent elements would not necessarily entail the loss of its statehood” (para. 363 of the Advisory Opinion of 23 July 2025).

While it is true that no specific legislation concerning the category of ‘climate migrants/refugees’ exists, the need for a legal framework that may be applicable has led to many suggestions in this regard. International standards of protection of human rights must be the starting point [17] as environmental catastrophes often lead to human rights violations, some treaties may apply to these situations, regardless of the fact that people have migrated due to climate change. In this context, for example, the obligation not to deport someone may arise, given the prospective violation of their human rights in such a situation [18][19][20].

Another possibility that may be triggered is the (limited) application of refugee law. However, this would only occur when other factors that trigger asylum were also present in the situation [21][22]. The crisis in Sudan is a clear example of such a situation, where the successive climate-induced changes and resulting food insecurity have led to increased violence and instability in the region [23] – which, in turn, could trigger the application of refugee law. In addition to these possibilities, there are also soft law instruments that could provide guidance, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Nansen Initiative, or even the Paris Agreement (for mapping, see [13]; [17]). Finally, some States are beginning to adopt agreements and measures – such as visas and humanitarian permits – designed to address climate-induced

displacement [17], and there is an increasing body of jurisprudence concerned with these circumstances [24][25][26].

Among the most recent examples of relevant jurisprudence is the case brought before the Interamerican Court of Human Rights [27], in which a connection was established between climate change and the responsibility of the state for particularly vulnerable individuals, including those deprived of their liberty. In such cases, special attention must be paid to the human rights of these individuals, as they are unable to simply leave the affected country or region and are, therefore, more susceptible to deteriorating detention conditions – including migrants detained while awaiting a decision on their cases (see especially para. 592 and 628 of the Opinion of the Court). In this context, it is also worth mentioning its European counterpart, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which has also evaluated climate-related cases, to establish the state's responsibility for its citizens. Although they are not related to migration, they may be relevant to the question of the procedural standing of individuals, given that the threshold for establishing victim status, as defined by the Court, is particularly high (see [28] and [29]).

The international scenario regarding climate-induced displacement may be currently bleak, but there are some positive aspects and good practices to highlight. One such example is the Falepili Union Treaty, between Tuvalu and Australia. This treaty is the first to specifically address climate-related displacement [30], establishing a resettlement scheme to provide security to Tuvalu's endangered population. The priority of the Australian government is to support the Tuvaluan efforts in staving off climate-induced changes; in parallel, relocation opportunities are offered (in yearly quotas) to Tuvaluan nationals who wish to settle in Australia, and they become eligible to apply for Australian citizenship. Other commendable aspects include the fact that this visa, which is accessible from anywhere in the world, provides a safe and legal route for Tuvaluans to flee increasingly dire living conditions; envisions the right to reside indefinitely in Australia, with unlimited freedom to travel to Tuvalu; it is not limited to people with specific skills; and it encompasses vulnerable people (e.g., due to age or disabilities). In return, Australia has a de facto veto power over Tuvaluan agreements with third states in certain areas, such as security and defense. This is understandable, given that Australia is obliged to provide Tuvalu with security (and is concerned with countering China's influence in the region – for an analysis, see [17]).

B. Media Narratives of Climate-Induced Migration

Media play a central role in shaping public discourse on climate-induced migration. In fact, for many people around the world, journalistic narratives constitute the main window through which they encounter environmental displacement and the experiences of affected populations [31]. This influence operates through framing practices, that is, the editorial choices journalists and media organizations make regarding what to emphasize or omit,

including terminology, sources and interpretive angles. These decisions shape whether climate-induced migrants are portrayed as security threats or vulnerable victims [30], often obscuring the structural inequalities and systemic drivers that underpin displacement [33][34].

Such framing patterns are not limited to climate-induced migration; they have been widely documented in journalistic coverage of migration and asylum more broadly [35][36][37]. In this respect, media narratives do not simply mirror social reality. Rather, they play an active role in shaping the political and legal frameworks within which responses to climate-induced displacement are debated and ultimately formulated.

Recent scholarship on media and climate-induced migration identifies two dominant framing patterns. The first is the security or crisis frame. Within this perspective, climate-related mobility is linked to border pressure, threats to social cohesion or strain on national welfare systems. In various media contexts, including Europe, the United States and Australia [38], migration is presented as a security consequence of climate change. News narratives often draw direct connections between climate-related disasters, resource shortage, conflict, instability and large-scale population movements [32]. In this framework, the “climate-driven refugee” is constructed as a monolithic and potentially destabilizing figure [32].

Indicative headlines from major international outlets illustrate how crisis- and security-oriented framing materializes in practice. Titles such as “Is the world ready for mass migration due to climate change?” [39] in BBC and “The climate refugee crisis is landing on Europe's shores – and we are far from ready” [40] in Politico Europe foreground scale, urgency and political destabilization, thereby reinforcing a securitized understanding of climate mobility.

A second dominant pattern is the humanitarian or vulnerability frame. This perspective foregrounds the suffering of populations affected by droughts, floods, sea-level rise and other extreme weather events. Within this framework, displaced individuals are primarily depicted as victims of climate change, passive and powerless figures in need of rescue or assistance [32]. While such representations may evoke empathy and humanitarian concern, they also tend to individualize suffering and direct attention toward immediate hardship rather than toward the structural drivers of displacement. In doing so, it obscures broader dynamics such as global inequalities, the unequal historical and political responsibility for environmental harm (e.g. greenhouse-gas emissions) and deeper questions of rights and climate justice [32].

At the same time, headlines such as “Flooding and droughts drove them from their homes. Now they're seeking a safe haven in New York” [41] in The Guardian foreground environmental suffering while simultaneously relocating the narrative to a major Western urban center. In doing so, they combine humanitarian victimization with an implicit focus on destination societies, illustrating how vulnerability framing may coexist with latent concerns

about reception, capacity and territorial impact. Such hybrid constructions demonstrate that humanitarian and security logics are not mutually exclusive but frequently intertwined within the same narrative structure. This convergence reflects what Bettini [33] describes as the dominance of apocalyptic narratives in climate-induced migration discourse, in which both humanitarian and security framings ultimately depoliticize the issue by presenting displacement as an inevitable crisis rather than as a politically produced condition embedded in global power relations.

This interplay raises a broader analytical question: how are these frames constructed? Through which journalistic mechanisms do they take shape? Frames are not abstract categories; they are produced through concrete editorial choices. Contextualization shapes meaning, determining whether displacement is presented as an isolated event or as part of broader structural and historical processes. Language plays a central role, as specific terms can signal crisis, threat or vulnerability. The selection of sources also matters, as political actors, security experts, humanitarian organizations or affected individuals each bring different perspectives and priorities. Finally, the way a story defines the problem and proposes solutions, whether in terms of border control, emergency relief or climate justice, contributes decisively to reinforcing particular framing patterns.

One of the most visible mechanisms through which these framing dynamics operate is the episodic nature of media coverage. Journalistic attention tends to intensify in the aftermath of extreme weather events, such as major wildfires, floods, hurricanes or during international climate summits, but often declines once the immediate crisis recedes. Consequently, climate-induced mobility is represented in episodic terms, tied to spectacular moments of disaster, rather than as an ongoing and structurally embedded phenomenon.

This episodic logic contributes to processes of dehumanization. When coverage is centered primarily on dramatic events, affected populations are frequently portrayed as anonymous masses or statistical figures, rather than as individuals with agency, histories and rights. The absence of sustained reporting limits deeper contextualization and reinforces simplified narratives that either dramatize crisis or reduce displacement to humanitarian emergency, without acknowledging the complex social political and economic conditions that shape mobility.

This episodic and disaster-centered logic becomes particularly visible in headlines that foreground immediate death tolls and large-scale displacement figures. Titles such as “At least 68 people killed in flooding as rains worsen Sudan’s plight” [42] in *The Guardian* and “Climate disasters displaced 250 million people in past 10 years, UN report finds” [43], also in *The Guardian*, prioritize casualty counts and aggregate statistics, frequently anchored in institutional sources. While such reporting conveys scale and urgency, it simultaneously abstracts affected populations into numerical categories. Individuals are rendered as counted bodies rather than narrated subjects,

reinforcing a mode of visibility in which climate mobility appears as a sudden humanitarian surge rather than as a structurally embedded and politically mediated process.

Within this episodic and decontextualized environment, language and the words journalists choose, constitute a central arena in which the politics of climate mobility unfolds, precisely because terminology is not merely descriptive; it carries normative and legal implications. This creates a tension: despite the absence of explicit recognition of climate related displacement under existing international refugee law, scholarship shows that media discourse more frequently employs the term “climate refugees” rather than “climate migrants” [44][45]. This preference is not neutral, as the label “refugee” carries strong moral and emotional resonance, conveying vulnerability and an implicit entitlement to protection. Headlines such as “The first internal climate refugees” in the Greek newspaper *Kathimerini* [46], referring to displaced populations after a natural disaster in central Greece, illustrate how this terminology amplifies humanitarian urgency. Yet this framing also produces a representational - legal mismatch: while morally powerful, the term ‘climate refugees’ does not align with established legal definitions, potentially shaping expectations of protection whose scope and applicability remain legally and politically unsettled.

A further crucial element concerns the selection of sources. Research indicates that media coverage frequently privileges institutional voices, such as political elites and government officials, while marginalizing the perspectives of affected communities. As Høeg et al.’s [47] study of BBC coverage demonstrates, individuals affected by climate induced displacement are more often spoken about than spoken with, a pattern that significantly constrains their represented agency. The predominance of institutional sources reinforces top-down narratives and contributes to portrayals in which displaced populations appear as objects of policy intervention rather than as subjects with political voice and lived experience.

This marginalization of lived experience is closely linked to the limited visibility of justice-oriented perspectives in mainstream coverage. The rights-based frame remains comparatively underrepresented and empirical research drawing on journalists’ own accounts confirms the structural and professional constraints that hinder the integration of rights-based perspectives into routine news production [48]. Yet this frame is normatively significant. It seeks to reposition climate-induced migration within broader debates on climate responsibility, structural inequality and human rights. From this standpoint, displacement is not treated as an unfortunate by-product of natural processes but as a foreseeable and unjust consequence of uneven development and the disproportionate environmental harm caused by historically high-emitting states. Climate justice, in this sense, entails recognition of the rights of vulnerable communities and the corresponding responsibilities of those who have contributed most to climate change [49].

Taken together, these patterns reveal that media narratives do not merely report on climate-induced

migration but actively structure how it is understood, debated and governed. The predominance of security and humanitarian framings, combined with the marginalization of justice-oriented perspectives, ultimately shapes the boundaries of political imagination within which climate mobility is rendered either a crisis to be managed or a responsibility to be collectively addressed.

IV. CONCLUSION

Even though Australia's Treaty with Tuvalu applies only to Tuvaluan nationals (and not to people of other nationalities migrating for the precise same reasons), it is still an outstanding example for future (worldwide) consideration. It has been recognized that climate change disproportionately impacts those countries that have contributed least to the problem and the multiple issues it creates (see [27]), which brings to the fore the need to provide safe migration paths for the people ultimately affected by sudden environmental catastrophes, as highlighted in the Global Compact for Migration (objective 5).

On the one hand, the duties to cooperate in addressing the issue and accommodate displaced people have been emphasized, particularly by Portugal and the Netherlands, in the context of the recent ICJ advisory opinion (in the oral and written submissions [50][51]). On the other hand, there may also be duties connected to assisting the affected population stay in their countries, namely by providing financial and/or technological assistance [52][53]. Both aspects have, in fact, been mentioned in the Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility [54], as focusing exclusively or predominantly on the duty to relocate could exacerbate the losses and burdens of those wishing to remain in their home territory.

As most displacement caused by climate change or environmental disasters is predicted to be internal [55], current approaches are mainly regional for the time being, staving off the need for an immediate global response to the issue. Africa, Latin America and the Pacific are the regions that have engaged the most with the issue, with Africa leading the way in terms of the most progressive legal frameworks concerning climate change [56]. A stellar example of this is the IGAD Protocol on Free Movement of Persons [57], which applies to climate-induced migration (but has not yet come into force). However, as habitable conditions worsen, particularly in certain parts of the world, states will eventually need to design a long-term strategy to address the effects of climate change on the population, particularly because of their respective contributions to the problem and their share of responsibility for mitigating the most negative consequences. Given the (at least, moral) duty of states to answer for the consequences of their climate-harming behavior, the way forward must encompass climate-induced migration within an applicable legal framework that considers a humanitarian and solidarity-based perspective.

Therefore, future global legal approaches should envisage safe migration pathways to ensure the survival of

affected populations, acknowledge the duty to cooperate with affected states by accommodating displaced people and/or helping impacted populations to stay in their country, and recognize their responsibility by imposing clear duties towards affected people who may find themselves deprived of their homes and livelihoods due to climate change.

At the same time, the effectiveness and legitimacy of future legal responses will depend not only on normative developments but also on the ways in which climate-induced migration is framed in public discourse. As this study has shown, dominant security and humanitarian narratives often overshadow justice-oriented perspectives, thereby shaping the boundaries within which political responsibility is imagined. A more balanced and rights-based media representation may therefore play a crucial role in fostering the solidarity and long-term commitment required for meaningful legal reform.

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