

# CODE RED: ISN'T THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS OUR THIRD WORLD WAR?

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Degradation - GHGs, Ozone Depletion and Climate Change

Australia is reeling under its worst bushfires in history, over 60 people have died in the ongoing Jakarta floods, Western Norway is experiencing an unusual heatwave in January... the list of climate catastrophes the world is witnessing is endless. With intensifying U.S.-Iran tensions, the term 'World War 3' is now going viral on social media platforms. But haven't we all been at war already? Isn't the raging global climate crisis our third world war? People are now questioning the economic implications of a third world war and if, in fact, we can afford it.

The latest report by Australian think-tank Breakthrough – National Centre for Climate Restoration, called 'Climate Emergency Defined', is a great read to understand why we need to act, and fast. Authored by environmentalist Paul Gilding, it analyses the scale, timing and urgency of the risks posed by climate change to determine 'whether an emergency response is both necessary and feasible'.

Explained: Is West Asia headed for war?

For example, it highlights how the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2018 report (on the impacts of global warming 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels) stated that we need to first cut CO2 emissions by 45% by 2030 (from 2010 levels), then reduce them to zero by 2050. 'This compares to the globally agreed Paris climate targets which involve not a 45% reduction, but an increase in emissions by 2030'.

Gilding writes that to turn these numbers around in just a decade requires a transformational change in the direction and structure of the economy. 'This is sufficient by itself to justify an emergency response... Only an emergency mobilisation could possibly achieve such a result in such a short time'. Failing to do so, he says, "could commit humanity to widespread misery for hundreds and possibly thousands of years. It could literally change the course of evolution and human history."

Yet, one can't be sure that governments are serious about mitigating climate change. Australia's fires have been raging since September and the country has lost over 6.3 million hectares of bush, forest land, and countless animals. Yet, Sydney's iconic fireworks display on New Year's Eve went as planned. Prime Minister Scott Morrison ignored calls to skip them and enjoyed a lavish party even as the country was burning.

Donald Trump is known to mock climate change and he has not only withdrawn from the Paris Climate Agreement but has rolled back regulations (set in place by the Obama government) aimed at reducing greenhouse emissions. He has also vehemently opposed US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal (GND) — a proposed legislation that aims to address climate change and economic inequality.

Back home, India Meteorological Department's report released on January 6 reveals that the average temperature across the country in 2019 was above normal. That we witnessed several high impact weather events like extremely heavy rainfall, heat and cold waves, snowfall, thunderstorms, dust storms, lightning, floods, etc. The Arabian Sea, which usually sees one cyclone a year, had five in 2019. Meanwhile, people are fighting the government to save Aarey Colony in Mumbai, reduce pollution in Delhi, and save forests from being razed for mining in

Odisha's Talabira region. It is interesting to note that at the 2015 Paris Summit, PM Narendra Modi claimed that India did not create the climate change menace but was suffering its consequences. Need we say more?

And to think Albert Einstein knew this decades ago: 'I do not know with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.'

If we don't learn our lessons now, soon we may not have a world to save.

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Heatwaves and floods which used to be 'once-in-a-century' events are becoming more regular occurrences, says an annual assessment of the Earth's climate by the World Meteorological Organization

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