Written submission of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) to the Special Rapporteur's 2022 report on climate and racial justice to the General Assembly

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Introduction

ENAR is the only pan-European anti-racism Network that combines advocacy for racial equity and facilitating cooperation amongst anti-racism civil society organisation. In February 2022, ENAR released a report, the Climate Crisis is a (Neo)colonial Capitalist Crisis: experiences, responses and steps towards decolonising climate action (Annexed) demonstrating the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on racialised communities in Europe. This submission is based on the findings from our report and our advocacy and research for a Just Green Transition that leaves no one behind.

The climate crisis is unfolding here and now, and racialised communities are amongst the hardest hit by climate breakdown in Europe, and worldwide.[1] This is not a coincidence, or geo-physical accident. It is a result of interactions between climactic changes and structural racism, resulting in racialised people being denied employment, income, a healthy and safe environment and access to political decision-making.

Europe's history of (neo)colonial capitalism, underpinned by racism and facilitated by states and large corporations, has created the conditions for what we witness today. Historically, corporations played a key role in Europe's fundamentally extractive colonial project, which aimed to occupy and extract wealth, resources and labour from foreign lands.[2] Capitalism provided and continues to provide an economic, political and social framework to do this.

Despite many successful resistance movements for independence driving colonial occupying forces out of the global South in the mid-to-late 20th Century, (neo)colonial structures and policies have taken new shapes and forms to maintain power imbalances. Today, racialised communities face setbacks due to this domination of knowledge-production and wealth extraction. They continue to have little sovereignty over their lands and communities, and suffer new forms of (neo)colonialism propagated by nation-states and corporations; such as keeping the global financial system as a tool for extraction of wealth for the benefit of global North, mining for petroleum and rare earth metals, and exploitative foreign policies.

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[1] Leon Sealey-Huggins, "The climate crisis is a racist crisis': structural racism, inequality and climate change," in *The fire now: Anti-racist scholarship in times of explicit racial violence,* eds. Azeezat Johnson, Remi Joseph-Salisbury and i and Beth Kamunge (London, UK: Zed Books, 2018). Pp. 99 – 113.

[2] Oscar Gelderblom and Joost Jonker, "Completing a financial revolution: The finance of the Dutch East India trade and the rise of the Amsterdam capital market, 1595-1612," *Journal of Economic History* (2004): 641-672.

The setbacks caused by (neo)colonial capitalism are exacerbated and reinforced by climate breakdown. Some have termed this climate violence,[3] others more specifically climate racism.[4] Conceptualising this experience as a specific form of structural racism is important to understanding and combatting it.

Methods and analysis of ENAR's report

The ideas and experiences outlined were gathered and developed in several ways. These included scouring the academic and non-academic literature.

We aim to platform racialised communities' stories and to prompt strategic, decolonising and anti-racist climate action, based on these experiences and our analyses of historical and systemic inequalities. We share community-led resistance models across Europe, with inspiration for centring racialised voices in climate movements, and recommendations for policymakers and activists.

Case Studies

From French (neo)colonial legacies exposing racialised groups to health hazards and pollution, to racist urban planning exacerbating Roma communities' exclusion and utility precarity, the community stories collected represent a few examples of the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on racialised and indigenous groups in Europe.

French Colonial Legacies: from Chloredecone to Nitrogen Dioxide

Both on the European continent and in Europe's existing (neo)colonial territories, racialised communities are disproportionately impacted by pollution, where harmful materials are introduced into the environment and can negatively impact the quality of water, air and land.[5] Such pollution is often worsened by climate disruption. Chlordecone, a toxic pesticide, continued to be used on plantations in Martinique and Guadeloupe to grow cash crops until the mid-1990s, despite being outlawed in the United States and in metropolitan France.[6] It also addresses how racialised communities in metropolitan France are more likely to be located near hazardous sites like incinerators and waste management facilities, large ring roads and intersections.[7] Air quality in these areas is notably worse, due to nitrous oxide and other car emissions.

Indigenous Communities: In the Face of Climate Disruption and 'Green' Extractivist Projects

The realities and experiences of Indigenous communities worldwide are often erased from history and collective memories. The Arctic is one of the fastest-heating places on earth, and the Sámi and Inuit people living in or near the Arctic region are exposed to the risks and consequences of that. Arctic heating is almost twice as fast as the global average,[8] and there the consequences of this climate disruption are visible and dire. Added to this are the serious consequences of mining in the region for rare earth elements, a major resource required for Euro-America's increasingly tech-

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[3] Daniel Voskoboynik, "A Guide to Climate Violence," The World at 1C, (9 February, 2019).

[4] "Climate Liberation Bloc: Decolonizing the Dutch Climate Movement". Mama Cash, (November 8 2019).

[5] Diane Boudreau, Melissa McDaniel, Erin Sprout, Andrew Turgeon, 'Pollution' (18 August 2011).

[6] Tim Whewell "The Caribbean islands poisoned by a carcinogenic pesticide," BBC News, Martinique, (20 November 2020).

[7] Lucie Laurian, "Environmental injustice in France," *Journal of environmental planning and management* 51.1 (2008): 55-79.

[8] Environmental Justice Foundation, Rights At Risk: Arctic Climate Change and the Threat to Sami Culture. (6 February 2019).

driven 'green' economy. Indigenous communities worldwide and in the Arctic region are therefore already facing the harsh realities of climate disruption.

From Antigypsyism towards Accommodation and Utility Justice

Today, Roma and Irish Travellers experience serious exclusion on the basis of their perceived race or ethnic background; this is a mechanism of (neo)colonial capitalism. Structural racism against Roma, Irish Travellers and other communities often includes the denial of safe, appropriate accommodation and affordable utilities. These problems worsen as the climate crisis continues. Additionally, the current energy transition, with its underlying (neo)colonial capitalist logic, will likely make utilities scarcer and more expensive than they previously were. There is a compounding effect, as these communities face so much structural oppression that the impacts of climate breakdown simply add to insurmountable setbacks and violence. Many Roma communities are forced to live near landfills or other hazardous waste sites that are flood-prone to make way for industrial or tourism developments, while Irish Travellers often do not have access to the culturally-specific accommodation they deserve, and are denied reliable access to water, affordable heating and electricity, otherwise known as utility poverty

Environmental Migration and Precarity

The UN's refugee agency is expecting the number of people displaced due to the climate crisis to significantly increase.[9] It is likely that more people will move to Europe from countries in the Global South that are highly vulnerable to climate change because Europe's historical wealth accumulation through extraction from other parts of the world means that European nations are more equipped to deal with the climate crisis and its consequences.

Simultaneously, Europe's border security market is anticipated to experience annual growth of 15%, with a large expansion expected in biometrics and artificial intelligence (AI) markets.[10] Here, corporations play a role in "actively shap[ing] the policies from which they profit...", with large IT companies developing the EU's 'Smart Borders Package', national surveillance mechanisms and biometric databases, increasingly privatised migration retention and detention, as well as the use of commercial and charter flights for expulsion.[11] This shocking reality clearly highlights the (neo)colonial capitalist nature of this crisis, demonstrating a need for divestment from the border-industrial complex and a complete system overhaul.

The Right-Wing and the Mainstream Climate Movement

The normalisation of far-right rhetoric is synonymous with a rise in racism in Europe, and elsewhere. Far-right ideologies support white supremacist, xenophobic ideas, in part to prevent third-country nationals from entering the region. Most far-right groups are also climate sceptics or downright denialists.[12] However, we are witnessing the mainstreaming of eco-fascist narratives which weaponise the fight against climate breakdown, and the importance of environmental preservation,

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[9] Tim Stickings "UN refugee agency 'preparing for the worst' from climate change," The National News, (27 September 2021).

[10] "Divestment from the border industrial complex could spur 'a politics that protects and upholds the rights of refugees and migrants'", Statewatch, April 2021.

[11] "FINANCING BORDER WARDS The Border industry, its financiers and human rights," Transnational Institute, April 2021.

[12] "Climate change denial strongly linked to right-wing nationalism," Chalmers, 21 May 2021.

in order to push their hostile environment agenda. Thus, the isolation of climate justice narratives from the struggles for other forms of social justice leaves the climate movement in Europe vulnerable to co-optation by racist right-wing narratives.[13]

Conclusions

Capitalism is built on a (neo)colonial world order and is at the root of the climate crisis. By exploring how various racialised communities in Europe are impacted by the climate crisis, this submission shows how (neo)colonial capitalism belies their adverse exposure. It is not simply the final impact of climate disruption, but the extraction and flows of resources, labour as well as capital that must be examined. Mechanisms that exclude racialised communities, from accumulated wealth, public services to secure such wealth and services for a select few, and from political representation to meaningfully participating in climate decision-making are also a part of maintaining colonial capitalism.

True climate justice towards an equitable, sustainable future for all requires the recognition and abolition of (neo)colonial capitalism. We need to reckon with (neo)colonial histories and shift away from the underlying ideas. This is the only way to ensure a just future for all, and also to protect racialised communities from the rise of eco-nationalism or the far-right capture of environmental and climate issues, inciting further slide into racism in Europe.

Recommendations

PRINCIPLES	ACTIONS AND DEMANDS
CENTRING JUSTICE FOR RACIALISED COMMUNITIES	
Neo)colonial capitalism plays a central role in the climate crisis	**Call for reparations for historical wrongs, including slavery, wealth extraction and occupation .** Reparations include cessation, restitution and repatriation, compensation, satisfaction and rehabilitation, for *all* racialised communities across the world .

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[13] Hilary Moore, "Burning Earth, Changing Europe: How the racist right exploits the climate crisis – and what we can do about it," (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung: Brussels, 6 March 2020).

Environmental and climate racisms are forms of structural racism that are driven by (neo)colonial capitalism.	**Call for environmental and climate reparations for *all* racialised communities in the Global North and Global South.**
	Instead of using the frame of 'aid' extended in times of crisis, the frame of climate debt should be used, paid even if there is no immediate emergency at hand.
Indigenous communities deserve attention as racialised, oppressed communities They should be included in anti-racism organising given the framework of (neo)colonial capitalism that undergirds the climate crisis and their oppression.	**Support and include Indigenous communities in anti-racist networks and organising in Europe.**
The racist right-wing co-optation of the climate crisis is dangerous to climate justice for racialised communities.	**Denounce and call out racist right-wing co-optation of climate narratives and eco-fascist agendas.**
The right to say no (to industrial, extractive projects) is an essential part of a just and equitable society.	**Support racialised, Indigenous and other marginalised communities in stopping (neo)colonial capitalist projects and industries that impact them, and support their informed prior consent and land rights.**
DECOLONISING POLITICAL ECONOMY	
Political and economic thought must shift away from extractivist, (neo)colonial capitalism focused on sustainable development, towards democratic, decolonised and equitable economies.	**Support and stimulate local democratic economies and community wealth-building among racialised communities in Europe,** giving them decision-making power and sovereignty back over their livelihoods.
	Support social and green entrepreneurship by racialised communities. Supply them with skills and funding to gain access to new economies.

Developing local food systems is an important part of climate and environmental justice. Lack of access to healthy food or the denial of the ability to grow it due to corporate capture of land is part of (neo)colonial capitalism.	**Support local communities in developing their own local food solutions, through local farms, markets, food co-operatives.**

DECOLONISING CLIMATE SCIENCE

Scientific thought must shift away from white, colonial roots towards anti-racist scientific thought.	**Advocate for traditional ecological knowledge to be valued alongside modern science.** Oftentimes Indigenous and ancestral knowledge is relegated to mysticism and rejected as unreliable, while this knowledge has allowed these communities to live in harmony with the land for centuries.
Shifting from saviourship towards stewardship is essential, within and beyond climate movements.	**Support re-wilding efforts led by Indigenous communities and communities that have traditional knowledge of the land.**

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

International solidarity is central in tackling this crisis, in which Europe is a perpetrator, and racialised communities worldwide are suffering disproportionately.	**Support organisations in the Global South and lift their voices.** We must not forget countries which are on the frontlines of climate breakdown. **Push for documentation for migrant workers in Europe.** In the EU, the labour of many migrants is exploited for citizens' gain, exposing them to climate disruption, while they are not able to obtain regularisation.
The relationship between war, militarism, migration and environmental destruction must receive renewed attention. Creating awareness about these relationships, in anti-racist, migrant rights and climate movements,	**Push for climate disruption to be used as grounds for accepting refugees.** Demand legislation broadening the definition of refugee to include climate-related grounds and utilise

leads to more collaboration and stronger platforms for anti-racist climate action.	existing legislation to facilitate asylum for these refugees.
Borders are a colonial imposition, as are colonial ties. Solidarity must be shown across them, to break them down.	**Collaborate with racialised communities in 'formerly colonised regions', to raise their voices up. E.g.** The collaboration between le CRAN and various Martinican and Guadeloupian organisations. **Support collaborations across colonial borders**. Indigenous lands transcend borders, and collaboration across them helps break them down.
MAINSTREAMING DECOLONISING, ANTI-RACIST APPROACHES	
We must mainstream decolonising approaches in European institutions and policy packages.	**Push for the European Green Deal (EGD) and any national deals/just transition packages to include racialised communities explicitly.**
Housing, sanitation and utilities are fundamental rights.	**Demand that housing, sanitation and utilities for ALL are included in any climate policy, including the EGD, other Just Transition packages and community-specific policy packages.** E.g. the **EU Action Plan Against Racism 2020-2025, National Action Plans Against Racism and other frameworks, including** Roma post-2020 strategic framework.
Nothing about us without us; representation and participation are important.	**No more climate talks in Europe without adequate representation from racialised communities in politics at every level.**
ANTI-RACIST ORGANISING	

Racialised voices and modes of work deserve to be amplified in the European climate movement.	**Build our own spaces and empower ourselves to take action.** We need to have resources and information to build spaces where we feel comfortable organising for decolonising, anti-racist climate justice. **Host action training and spaces for racialised or marginalised communities.**

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ANNEX : [ENAR report](#)