

Hello everyone! My name is Shantel and I am a new member of the organization here in Utah called High Road for Human Rights! I'm currently a student at the University of Utah and am interested in International Law, and the global issues surrounding human rights. This is really why I decided to join the team at High Road, because I'm determined to push myself to become more educated and active about human rights violations, and thanks to High Road here I am speaking to you today about climate change!

All of us here recognize that climate change exists, we have read the scientific proof about increasing amounts of CO₂ both in the atmosphere and oceans, and unfortunately the disruption of our climate is caused by us, our poor habits, and namely our reliance on the burning of fossil fuels and forests for energy. The climate crisis has commonly been understood as both an economic and security problem, but more importantly and yet just recently considered, is how the current climate crisis directly impacts and violates our human rights.

Most active citizens have heard the gist of climate change so here quickly are the problems and how they are connected to our human rights. As a result of the CO₂ increase in the atmosphere the global temperature is rising and the surface temperature is warmer than it has ever been.

This warming leads to the melting of ice caps and glaciers where 77% of our freshwater reserves are held. The melting of ice caps means early snowmelt and drought for those who live in these regions and it also means the disappearance of our limited 1% usable water on Earth.

This freshwater will essentially drain into the oceans raising the sea level by several feet eventually wiping out major coastal cities resulting in the death or relocation of millions of people.

The increase in surface temperature will also increase evaporation in some areas causing severe food and water shortages as a result of droughts; however in other areas warm atmospheric air means a greater accumulation of water vapor. Warm moist air is what fuels extreme storms such as hurricanes, cyclones, and floods which as we have recently seen in Japan and Australia, cause unimaginable destruction.

Yet another issue is the inescapable spreading of infectious diseases through mosquitos that thrive and reproduce in warmer climates.

But most importantly, if we continue to allow the amounts of CO₂ in the atmosphere and oceans to increase, thousands of species, including us will lose our homes and food sources. As the ocean becomes more acidic the bleaching of coral reefs will continue, and thousands of species will become extinct. And if the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere continues to increase it is estimated that by 2100 we will be breathing the same air as dinosaurs did, and they aren't here to tell us how well that worked for them.

Each one of us has a carbon footprint, but fortunately everyone here realizes their impact and has agreed to walk for climate change, for greater awareness of the issues, and for a commitment to reduce our individual contribution to the disruption of the climate. It's finally warming up here so if you are going somewhere nearby, bike or walk there. Buy your own reusable water bottle, use the go-green bags at the grocery store, and recycle! My greatest contribution to the climate crises is all of the recyclable materials I've thrown away in the past. Most of the time I wasn't sure if I was even able to recycle the item; Google it; there are tons of products that can be recycled, start buying those, and then give them back to be reused. The iMatter youth are asking for a simple 5% reduction, I think that is something we all can do for Our Climate. Our Future. Our Rights. Thank you!