

## Climate and Injustice

We know about human selfishness and greed, but also constantly witness compassion and generosity. The latter qualities were brought brilliantly to life by a heartrending photograph that catalyzed the world into action around the Syrian refugee crisis. The unity the crisis created was very quick by international standards, and close to complete.

So why isn't there a similar coming together around what's possibly the largest present day threat to all life, all species?

There's no lack of will to save the planet, from school children around the world to their parents and grandparents. Yet our collective security has been increasingly compromised by the continuation of adversarial politics, aggravated by well-funded special interest groups.

In a global civilization, none of us is safe unless all of humanity is safe. It was over a century ago that Iranian-born ['Abdu'l-Bahá](#), the son of the founder of the [Bahá'í Faith](#), wrote *"all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved."*

Since that era, the material unification of humanity has grown by leaps and bounds. True unity, though, requires justice, which in turn requires the willingness to abide by a common code. In these times of terrorism when agreement on common values is often seen as impossible, it's good to remember that the opposite is true. Commonly held values were articulated and accepted by almost every government and people on 10 December 1948, in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). Created by a commission representing a cross-section of countries and cultures, its principles reflect the common spiritual heritage of all humankind.

All of humanity's current problems are ultimately spiritual, values-based issues. If we're to progress to a coordinated and just system of international trade, politics, and law, there has to be a willingness to defer to a code of principles. Yet, internationally we remain laissez-faire, largely unregulated, and subject to the tyranny of large corporations. This may partly explain our inability to respond effectively to climate change.

Appropriate legislation is one solution since, as Naomi Klein points out in [This Changes Everything](#), corporations don't do well at self-regulation. But they do respond to markets. Taking action against cruelty and oppression, individually and collectively, would allow us to eliminate the world's most pressing injustices, which would in turn have an enormously positive impact on climate change.

It turns out that educating ourselves on ethical and humane consumer choices is an effective climate strategy available to us all. According to Kevin Bales in [Blood and Earth](#), about 30 million people in the world work in appalling conditions to produce everything from bargain-priced shrimp to cellphones, and in the process produce an astonishing amount of CO<sub>2</sub>. On this continent, the inhumane treatment of

literally billions of animals occurs daily, through [factory farming](#). This is the leading cause of ocean dead zones, species extinction, water pollution and a major source of methane, a greenhouse gas more powerful than CO2.

We who are so fortunate to live in this incredibly compassionate and generous part of the world should be the first to see the intimate connection between injustice and climate change. We can't solve one without the other.

*See Spiritually Speaking online for links related to this article. Sheila Flood practices the [Bahá'í Faith](#) and is Secretary of the Victoria Multifaith Society.*