



"The End of the Month, The End of the World": Same Actors, Same Struggle

For the Convergence of Labor and Ecology Movements

Climate Justice Coalition, Turkey

We believe that labor organizations and ecological organizations must work together to achieve the general goal of climate justice. With this perspective text, we aim to provide a starting point for labor movements and climate discussions within unions in 2024, aligning with the interests of workers across all sectors. We encourage labor organizations to consider or adapt this proposal in their meetings and work together to develop sector-specific approaches and demands for the issue.

Introduction

The UN Secretary-General stated that the world is in a new era of unprecedented extreme weather events affecting every corner of the globe. The International Energy Agency (IEA) emphasizes the need to reduce fossil fuel usage by 25% in this decade to stay below the 1.5°C target set by the Paris Climate Agreement, stating that new fossil fuel fields cannot be developed.

Both globally and in Turkey, the working class is already experiencing the horrendous consequences of climate change, affecting their lives, livelihoods, access to food and water, housing, forced migration, unbearable working conditions, and emergency situations. Capitalism is not only causing ecological destruction but is also harming the bodies of workers, suggesting that the sustainability of capitalist production relies on such destruction.

Governments and companies are doing nothing to protect the people and the planet from the effects of climate change, and are trying to present their evasion of their commitments as a virtue with rhetoric such as the Green New Deal. Yes, governments and companies have declared war on people and the planet. The ecological crisis affects human health irreversibly according to all "scientific" criteria. From the perspective of human communities, the greatest harm is inflicted on the poorest.

Web sitesi : iklimadaletikoalisyonu.org **Mail :** iklimadaletikoalisyonu@gmail.com
Twitter: iklimadaleti_k **Instagram:** iklimadaletikoalisyonu **Facebook:** İklim Adaleti Koalisyonu



Everyone who must work to survive is facing the health risks of ecological crisis, environmental pollution, and the damage caused by waste, and capitalism manages to act as if all these are the fault of workers. All this aside, "dirty work" is presented as the only alternative for workers who are made to pay for the pollution created by capitalism.

For all these reasons, the "workers' power in production" takes on a new meaning. In addition to individual health and safety of workers, "class interests" require production to be constrained by needs, prioritizing the health of both workers and nature and all other species within it over profit. The ecological crisis that triggers and determines all other crises must be placed at the forefront of the agenda of the labor movement against governments and companies. Unions, which are the only existing power against the state and employers regulating working life in a profit-oriented manner, must understand the extent of the ecological crisis. An ecological struggle that does not take on the central role of workers in the transformation strategy cannot succeed. Conversely, a labor movement that does not even address the ecological crisis in its agenda is destined to fail in protecting the rights of labor.

We call on all labor organizations to join the fight for climate justice.

Due to the urgent need for conscious intervention by workers to secure the future of the planet, we invite unions, other class organizations, and unorganized workers to collectively engage in the labor movement within the climate justice political program. Our united movement with common principles can make a significant impact in the public domain, constructing mass resistance. We can break our habits and establish a collaboration that transforms both the labor movement and the ecology movement together.

We understand that climate change is a class issue and a union issue for the working class. Inequality and deteriorating living standards for the working class are intertwined with the fossil fuel-driven market economy and austerity policies. Therefore, we must collectively resist attempts to divide workers with greenwashing, meaningless climate agreements, green transformation rhetoric, "green" jobs, and similar escapades that pretend everything is fine by hiring sustainability experts. We must resist attempts to use the climate crisis to divide workers. The solution to the climate crisis should prioritize the interests of the planet, workers, and societies, not the profits of capital.

Solutions for Workers and Society

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Twitter: iklimadaleti_k **Instagram:** iklimadaletikoalisyonu **Facebook:** İklim Adaleti Koalisyonu



- In order to protect the ecosystem for all workers, including the middle class that is massively impoverished, production must be planned based on need. This will mean less working time for workers without reducing their wages, especially in industries such as energy resources. We deserve to live not to enrich others but to fulfill ourselves.
- To prevent the destructive deterioration of the climate crisis, we urgently need to move away from oil and gas, urgently exit coal, limit petrochemical and automotive industries, and put an end to mega transportation projects and shopping malls. However, the cost of transitioning to a carbon-free economy and society cannot be imposed on those with the lowest purchasing power. A system must be developed where increasing taxes on companies that openly destroy the planet for their profits are collected from those who are most tolerated by the advocates of neoliberalism, especially multinational corporations.
- All measures taken for the climate emergency must be realized through public investments. The unemployment caused by the exit from fossil fuels must be compensated by the public through green jobs. Massive funding should be mobilized for renewable energies, energy-efficient buildings and infrastructure, protection of forests, pastures, and agricultural areas, waste management, vocational training, and requalification, prioritizing the natural cycles of global and local ecosystems. Workers who will lose their jobs due to the transition should be guaranteed direct and urgent employment with the nature of public works, comprehensive and continuous right to health.
- Sectors that meet critical and basic needs such as energy, water, transportation, mail, internet, education, health, and social care must be publicly owned. Workers have the right to live in a healthy environment, in housing that meets minimum healthy living standards, with access to clean air, water, and soil around their living spaces, and free transportation to parks and social facilities in cities. We demand our rights.
- Today, where access to food is becoming increasingly difficult, and we face food crises, workers have the right to access good nutrition at least as much as the rich who exploit society and nature. At the same time, agroecology, the rehabilitation of degraded soils, meadows, and aquatic ecosystems, the preservation of heirloom seeds and biodiversity are prerequisites for the right of workers to access food.
- Capitalism aggravates exploitation by not paying for women's domestic labor. Additionally, we must end all forms of discrimination and exploitation of women's



labor in the job market, from hiring to social rights. The entire reproductive sphere burdened on women's shoulders must be reviewed, and care labor must be socialized.

- Everyone under the age of 18 is a child, and child labor exploitation is unacceptable. The right to education, nutrition, play, and free self-development must be granted to children, and ensuring these rights for all children should be a priority responsibility of the state. This is our obligation to future generations. It is our red line.
- Working people should not pay the price of a crisis they did not create. A fair and progressive taxation system targeting big capital and polluters must be implemented.
- We must fight for policies that stop climate change and environmental degradation based on economic and social justice.
- Political/ecological actors who see workers and the working class as the subject of the struggle in other countries are our allies in the fight for climate justice. If ecocide knows no borders, neither should the working class. We do not recognize borders.

Our Approach

We do not expect states and companies trapped in the quagmire of hypocrisy, where accepting the role of fossil fuels in causing the climate crisis is considered a virtue, to provide these solutions.

The healthy relationship between humans and nature is based on transforming nature through labor to meet basic needs. In this context, the only way to eliminate the alienation of humans from nature and their labor in the capitalist system is for workers to collectively participate in decisions about their labor, from the shape of production to how and what to produce, determining working conditions, and where company profits should be invested.

Therefore;

We must build a participatory, democratic structure to plan, coordinate, finance, and provide education/training for the necessary workforce for a rapid and large-scale transition to a carbon-free economy.



Workers and unions must be directly involved in designing and defining what carbon-free industries and their future workforce will look like.

We must form alliances within and between sectors, branches at the national and global levels to develop joint industrial strategies contributing to the 'holistic economy' approach for climate justice, including interactions with society and climate justice groups.

Emergency Action Plan

To achieve all this, we first need an urgent action plan, to be implemented together with the unions. In this context;

- We must plan policies addressing climate change and ecological destruction in a way that aligns with the interests of workers and society, and develop strategies for collective agreements, strikes, and actions to achieve them.
- We must develop transition plans that cover all sectors of the economy, encompassing all equality demands and providing protection for all workers, including jobs, wages, pensions, education and skills, and union rights, as a minimum.
- The solution to the ecological crisis cannot be left to the mercy of states, companies, or false approaches that try to appear ecological. The future of the planet lies in the hands of those who must work to survive, those who cannot find work even though they need work, those whose work is not paid. This responsibility lies with the working class in the broadest sense, and it must take on this responsibility before it is too late.

This text has been collectively produced by the Climate Justice Coalition Labor Working Group through a series of meetings with various participants on the subject and is always open to new contributions.



Climate Justice Coalition

Note: As a result of the workshop we held as the Cop26 Coalition, we have been continuing our way as the "Climate Justice Coalition" since our press conference on December 25, 2021 in order to defend climate justice against the climate crisis caused by capitalist political economy. Our aim is to grow, develop and continue the struggle as part of international movements in this direction. Our coalition has 75 affiliated organisations and is open to individual and institutional participation.