**Climate collapse**

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In many of his recent writings, Noam Chomsky has warned that humanity has reached a very dangerous point because we are now living in a world of cascading crises. Indeed, when we look around us, we see a global web of crises. Economic inequality is destabilizing democracies and making a mockery of the vision of a decent society; armed conflicts continue to mark human existence; and nuclear weapons and global warming threaten humanity’s survival. Meanwhile, we must feel aghast over the fact that cynicism and irrationality continue to define the mindset of the powers that be. This is precisely the reason why Chomsky has always seen activism as our only hope.

What’s happening in Gaza is an abomination, one that the leaders of this world are watching coldly from a distance. The same can be said about climate collapse, which is as real as the daily slaughtering of scores of innocent women and children in Gaza by Israel’s military. Our global institutions are incapable of doing anything meaningful about these crises. Real power is in the hands of the most powerful nation-states and their leaders have opted to turn a blind eye to both disasters so as not to disrupt business as usual. Profits and geostrategic interests take priority over human lives and the environment. This is as clear as day, and it has always been so since at least the emergence of capitalism and the rise of the nation-state.

The current conflict in Ukraine began on February 24, 2022, and peace remains as elusive as ever. The US wants peace in Ukraine as much as Netanyahu wants to see a ceasefire deal in Gaza. The continuation of the war in Gaza is vital to the continuation of Netanyahu's political career. In fact, Netanyahu will most likely celebrate by uncorking a bottle of champagne if an all-out war exploded in the Middle East. He knows he can’t possibly lose with the US backing Israel. The cost of an all-out war in terms of human lives, either Israeli or Iranian or Arab lives, is simply irrelevant to him – or to Washington. Or what another war might do to the environment. The war in Gaza is also a war on the environment; in fact, it is “a widespread and deliberate act of ecocide,” according to a study by Forensic Architecture.

As Chomsky has pointed out, “history is all too rich in records of horrendous wars, indescribable torture, massacres and every imaginable abuse of fundamental rights.” But the great man has gone to great lengths to stress that the climate crisis is “unique in human history” and, like nuclear weapons, can destroy organized human life as we know it. Yet, humanity spends annually trillions of dollars on weapons and the military but finds it economically unrealistic to devote the necessary funds to protect the earth.

So much for rationality. Indeed, consider the global implications of the melting of the Antarctica sea ice. It may be winter in the Southern Hemisphere, but the Antarctica is experiencing a major heat wave that has made temperatures rise 50 degrees Fahrenheit above normal. This is the second major heat wave in Antarctica in the last two years. The entire planet has experienced more than 1.5 Celsius of warming in the 12-month period between July 2023 and June 2024, but Antarctica warms twice faster than the rest of the world, according to latest observations. If all the ice vanished, sea levels might rise by more than 150 feet.

It is no longer an issue of if but when major coastal cities will go under. We already know that the super-rich and powerful don’t care about the rest of us, but it seems they also don’t care about the future of their own children and grandchildren. As Chomsky has underscored in some of the email exchanges that we’ve had, their self-gratification is even greater now that they know that the climate crisis is speeding toward catastrophe.

Indeed, as Copernicus Climate Change Service Director Carlo Buontempo recently said in connection with the new record set for the daily global mean temperature “we are now in truly uncharted territory…”

And this brings us to the question of activism, which, as already pointed out, Chomsky sees as our only hope to save the planet. It’s our only way to stop carnages; our only way to stop the criminal negligence of climate collapse. We need the greatest possible degree of public mobilization for the purpose of exerting influence on policymakers. But without thoughtless methods like destroying works of art that turn the public against climate activism.

Excerpted: ‘A Note on Noam Chomsky and Climate Collapse’.

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