

Global warming helps terrorism' studies show



Parched earth: no famine in the history of the world has taken place in a functioning democracy

Global warming and terrorism: our two greatest challenges according to many. What if they are deeply linked? A growing body of science says they are. Or might it be just coincidence? 1

The singer's words were chilling. 'Lots of people don't know about this, but there is evidence to suggest that climate change was a big factor in how the Syrian conflict came about'. 2

Charlotte Church was talking on the BBC's *Question Time* and probably because she is not a known expert on the subject her words **carried little weight**. 3

When **Prince Charles** said much the same thing ('one of the major reasons for this horror in Syria, funnily enough was a drought that lasted for about five or six years') many dismissed it as typically **eccentric** -- as they may have done when the American Democratic presidential challenger **Bernie Sanders** said on primetime TV 'climate change is directly related to the growth of terrorism'. 4

This week, however, global leaders in Paris will be paying attention. This is mainly because they have started to notice the scientific work behind these high-profile views. 5

The latest study is from [Columbia University](#). ‘We’re not saying the drought caused the war,’ said Richard Seager, a climate scientist and coauthor. ‘We’re saying that it helped [kick things over the threshold into open conflict](#). And a drought of that severity was made much more likely by the ongoing human-driven drying of that region.’ 6

A bigger study is from the [University of California](#). This looked at personal crime, ethnic violence and war in 27 different societies and found that even small changes in temperature have a large impact: the higher the temperature, the greater the likelihood of violence. 7

Possible reasons are that (i) [destitute](#) people are more tempted to join militia to make a living (ii) [impoverished](#) governments can’t afford to put down rebellions (iii) crop failures often lead to [stockpiling](#), envy and theft (iv) large movements of people always create urban unrest (v) people are more angry when they are hot and hungry. 8

Some experts even believe that if we could [wean](#) ourselves off fossil fuels such as oil and gas we would help to solve both climate change and terrorism. In other words, the causes might be shared. 9

After all, oil money funds a lot of violent militias, nations and arms dealers. Without oil money, Islamic State, for one, would wither. 10

Blame game

Faced with this argument, sceptics say that while climate change might be one of the many causes of terrorism there are others that are far more significant including corrupt leaders and religious extremism. We must be wary of blaming it all on global warming. 11

But think of this, say the [proponents](#). There is undeniable evidence that a warmer world is a more violent world. This is one factor that is within our power to change. That alone should be enough to make us adjust our priorities. 12

ACTIVITIES:

- a) *Vocabulary* – Can you guess the meaning of the words or expressions in blue? Look up any words that are new to you.
- b) What is the connection being made between terrorism and climate change?
- c) What reasons are given for the possible connection between terrorism and climate change?
- d) Summarise the two opposing points put forward in the last 2 paragraphs.

You decide

1. Do you agree or disagree with the statement put forward throughout the article?