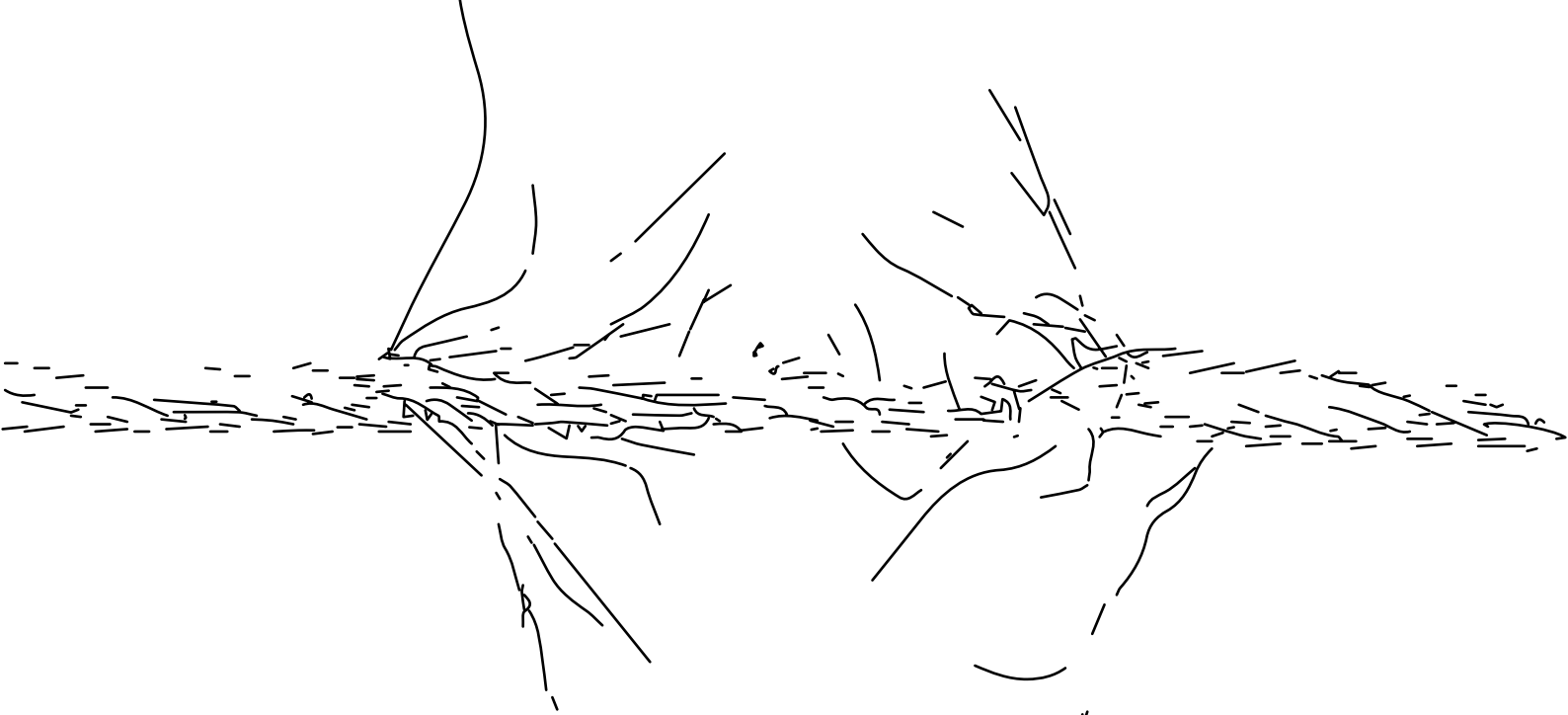


# SWITZER- LAND:

# BORDERS OVER CLIMATE



Within one week at the end of October 2022 the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR sounded the alarm bell three times about the devastating consequences of climate change for people in vulnerable countries, leading to mass displacement.



South Sudan experienced record-breaking rains and floodings, impacting two-thirds of the country and forcing hundreds of thousands people from their homes.<sup>1</sup>

Heavy rains and floodings have also been tormenting several countries in Central and West Africa, impacting millions.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, in Somalia almost one million persons were displaced primarily by the worst drought in forty years.<sup>3</sup>

According to the UNHCR, “Extreme weather across the African continent in 2022 has killed hundreds and forced millions to flee their homes.”<sup>4</sup>

Climate-induced migration is a reality and will continue to increase in coming years. Climate change is increasingly a factor behind displacement and migration. The majority of people who become displaced remain in their country of origin, but it will affect cross-border migration as well. The consequences of climate change are playing out most directly in low-income countries, intersecting with other causes for displacement.

As the research report *Global Climate Wall* by the Transnational Institute (TNI) of October 2021 showed, rich countries, who bear by far the most responsibility for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate change, have chosen their approach to the consequences of climate change and climate-induced migration by ‘spend[ing] more on arming their borders to keep migrants out than on tackling the crisis that forces people from their homes in the first place’.<sup>5</sup> They constantly fall short in living up to their promises to spend at least \$100 billion annually on climate finance (support to the most vulnerable countries).

The cooperation of rich countries with the border security industry and fossil fuel firms to maintain and profit from this approach is striking. Like most major international arms companies, the headquarters of the large majority of fossil fuels and resource extractivism companies are located in these rich countries, while the resources are exploited and exported from impoverished regions.

Instead of changing these practices, giving sufficient support to these exploited regions to mitigate and adapt to climate change and building up safe migration routes to help people on the move, the countries mainly responsible for climate change have built walls around them and resort to violence, illegal pushbacks and deportations to keep or get migrants out, while forcing poorer countries to act as outpost border guards. For this they team up with a rapidly growing border security industry, consisting of military and technology companies, which also have heavily influenced these politics of border militarisation and externalisation.<sup>6</sup> The same actors who are driving forces behind the growing border security industry also closely collaborate with fossil fuel companies to secure their business.

In the *Global Climate Wall* the spotlight was put on seven of the biggest emitters of GHGs who are also obligated to the supply climate finance (the so-called Annex II countries) – the United States, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Australia. In this additional briefing we look at the role and position of Switzerland.

## **BORDER MILITARISATION VS CLIMATE FINANCE**

The seven large emitters investigated in the *Global Climate Wall* on average spend over two times as much on border militarisation than on climate financing. It is important to note that many countries overreport their climate finance spending, by including loans and other non-grants and by including projects that have little or nothing to do with mitigating or adapting to climate change. Oxfam has been trying to estimate their actual climate financing.

Compared to the seven larger emitters Switzerland isn’t guilty of much overreporting on its climate finance. However, the Climate Action Tracker rates Switzerland’s climate finance spending as “highly insufficient”, writing that it ‘has committed to increasing its climate finance but contributions to date have been very low compared to what would be required under its fair share.’<sup>7</sup> According to Greenpeace Switzerland its climate finance should be increased by at least 50%.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Switzerland’s border militarisation budget is 33% higher than its current climate finance spending.

It has to be noted that the figures for actual climate financing in the table on the next page are high estimates, since they might still include loans and other non-grant instruments for multilateral climate financing, and money may go to non-climate friendly projects.<sup>9</sup> Based on a look at projects funded by Switzerland under climate finance, DataCatering estimates that Switzerland might actually spend ‘four times as much money on border protection than on ‘climate-just redistribution’’.<sup>10</sup>

## **HOSTING FOSSIL FUEL GIANTS**

With its central role in international financial services, Switzerland is the host country for many large international companies. This includes actors such as Glencore, Vitol, Cargill,

	HISTORIC EMISSIONS SINCE 1850	BORDER MILITARISATION BUDGET	REPORTED CLIMATE FINANCING	ESTIMATED ACTUAL CLIMATE FINANCING	RATIO BORDER TO CLIMATE FINANCING
United States	30.1%	\$19.6 BILLION	\$4.1 BILLION	\$1.8 BILLION	10.9:1
Germany	4.3%	\$3.4 BILLION	\$7.1 BILLION	\$4.4 BILLION	0.8:1
Japan	3.8%	\$2.2 BILLION	\$11.6 BILLION	\$4.9 BILLION	0.4:1
United Kingdom	3.6%	\$2.7 BILLION	\$4.0 BILLION	\$1.4 BILLION	1.9:1
Canada	2.6%	\$1.5 BILLION	\$0.3 BILLION	\$0.1 BILLION	15.0:1
France	2.1%	\$1.0 BILLION	\$4.4 BILLION	\$1.6 BILLION	0.6:1
Australia	1.8%	\$2.7 BILLION	\$0.6 BILLION	\$0.2 BILLION	13.5:1
Switzerland	0.2%	\$0.4 BILLION	\$0.3 BILLION	\$0.3 BILLION	1.3:1

TABLE 1: BORDER MILITARISATION BUDGET AND CLIMATE FINANCING – LARGEST ANNEX II COUNTRIES EMITTERS AND SWITZERLAND – (PER YEAR AVERAGE 2013-2018) 11

Mercuria or Gunvor, which are major drivers of climate-induced migration. When looking at its responsibility for climate change, this also means that even though Switzerland is on the first look only responsible for about 0.2% of global historic GHG emissions, it actually profits much more from exploitative business practices around the globe. For example up to 70% of the globally extracted gold is refined in Switzerland. Gold production forces people to leave their homes due to various reasons<sup>12</sup> – e.g. increasing natural disasters or as driver of local conflict or forced labour.

## BORDER MILITARISATION AND EXTERNALISATION

Despite this background of Switzerland's role in climate-induced migration, it is taking part in building up and expanding Fortress Europe. It does not only militarise its own borders, but also contributes to EU border security and externalisation efforts.

In May 2022 the Swiss electorate voted for the increased financial and personnel contribution to the budget of EU's border and coast guard agency Frontex.<sup>13</sup> An agency linked to systematic and severe human rights violations such as the violent pushback regime in the Aegean, crimes against humanity in Libya and cooperation with various actors along the different migration routes in order to establish a rigid regime of migration-control in the interest of Europe.<sup>14</sup> An agency that is increasingly close to the military and security industry and contracts companies with close business relations to the fossil fuel industry, such as Elbit or Airbus.<sup>15</sup>

The role of the Swiss representatives in the Agency's management board (Medea Meier

and Marco Benz) – where as non-EU partners they have limited voting rights -, remains covered up by the responsible authority, the BAZG, despite various open calls and media requests. As it turned out, Marco Benz misinformed the public, claiming the agency would care about human rights even though he at the time already read the OLAF report that clearly counteracts this perception.<sup>16</sup> In addition to that, Switzerland also contributes to externalization efforts through instruments like the Khartoum Process<sup>17</sup> – an interregional platform for cooperation amongst countries along migration routes between the Horn of Africa and Europe in which the EU teams up with the authoritarian regimes of Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan – or by financing the emergence of surveillance programs in the field of migration control as for example in Bosnia.<sup>18</sup>

Switzerland is an arms exporter of importance, ranking around place 15 on the global list, with a broad range of military and security companies.<sup>19</sup> While it has no large national players on the international border security and control market, it does host offices and/or production locations for some of the biggest profiteers of EU border policies, including Rheinmetall, Saab and Safran, and for surveillance and technology enterprises with significant shares in the international border control market, such as Palantir and IBM.

## COP27 IN EGYPT

Like other Annex II countries, Switzerland tries to create a climate-sensitive façade, for example during the international climate conferences. One of the most important of these meetings is the COP27, which is held in No-

vember 2022 in Egypt – a key country when it comes to European migration-control<sup>20</sup> and with severe repression against civil society<sup>21</sup> under authoritarian leader al-Sisi. Switzerland will participate, continuing its public advocacy for ‘more effective climate protection’ and for more investments in it<sup>22</sup>, while it has been lobbying for the opposite behind the scenes.<sup>23</sup>

While being one of the richest countries in the world, Switzerland’s contribution to climate financing is only modest, to not say shamefully small. In the light of how Switzerland profits from extractivist practices that are a major cause for climate change and climate affected displacement, also taking into account that the country hosts some of the major financiers of these practices, this makes Switzerland’s role clear: it pays more to shut down borders, build up walls and support a deadly migration regime than to support the countries and communities most affected by climate change with counteracting measures or means.

RESEARCH@ABOLISHFRONTEx.ORG  
WWW.ABOLISHFRONTEx.ORG

THIS FACT SHEET WAS WRITTEN BY  
LORENZ NAEGELI (WAV RECHERCHEKOLLEKTIV)  
MARK AKKERMAN (STOPWAPENHANDEL.ORG)

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- 4 See note 2
- 5 Miller, Todd with Nick Buxton and Mark Akkerman (2022, October) '[Global Climate Wall: How the world's wealthiest nations prioritise borders over climate action](#)'. Transnational Institute.
- 6 See the [Border Wars series of reports and briefings](#) by TNI and various partner organisations.
- 7 For methodology see pp 48-50 of Miller, Todd with Nick Buxton and Mark Akkerman (2022, October) '[Global Climate Wall: How the world's wealthiest nations prioritise borders over climate action](#)'. Transnational Institute. – Swiss border militarisation budget: spending on 'Border controls' under the task area 'Security' from [the national data centre](#).
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*(Ratio border to climate financing Switzerland)*