

Rising global temperatures bring violence, unrest, scientists say

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

August 5th, 2013

Catholic Online (www.catholic.org)

It's a given that when temperatures soar, so do tensions among humankind. Heat wears down the nerves, and increasing acts of violence are reported in urban centers during any heat wave. This has grave implications in the light of climate change, with higher temperatures worldwide over longer periods of time - with no signs of abating. Scientists have gathered to report on the implications of life in a hotter world -and the projections are understandably grim.

LOS ANGELES, CA (Catholic Online) - Called "the first comprehensive synthesis" of 60 different studies linking violence to climate change, the report suggests that as worldwide temperatures rise, so will wars, rape and murder. Conducted by researchers from the University of California, Berkeley, Princeton University, and the National Bureau of Economic Research in Cambridge, the findings were reported in the latest issue of Science.

The three researchers all took a "rigorous approach" to their selection of the studies that formed the basis of their work. Reviewing data from 60 primary studies, teams analyzed 45 different occurrences of violent conflict ranging over a period from about 10,000 BCE to the present.

Analysis proved the theory that there was "a strong historical correlation between societal violence and hotter temperatures."

Examining both interpersonal violence and intergroup conflict in the context of temperature and rainfall, the researchers used studies that quantitatively analyzed the amount of conflict in a given population just before and after a known change in climate had occurred.

"The magnitude of climate's influence is substantial," the authors reported. "For each one standard deviation change in climate toward warmer temperatures or more extreme rainfall, median estimates indicate that the frequency of interpersonal violence rises four percent and the frequency of intergroup conflict rises 14 percent."

One study found that police officers were more prone to draw their weapons as the temperature in the training room was increased.

"Imagine you're in a country, there are some protesters, and some policemen who are supposed to be maintaining order. Their response to that protest may change based on environmental conditions," co-author Solomon Hsiang, an assistant professor of public policy at UC Berkeley said. The officers definitely felt more threatened in a hot room.

However - the study did not rush to a conclusion that climate change is the sole, or even main, factor causing violent behavior. Researchers suggested that rising temperatures have a substantial impact on the incidence of human conflict that appears to extend across the planet, throughout history, and at every level of society.

© 2013, Distributed by NEWS CONSORTIUM.

Article brought to you by: Catholic Online (www.catholic.org)