

Climate Change and Female Targeted Conflict*

Siwan Anderson[†]

Daniel Jaramillo[‡]

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Abstract

This paper tests whether climate change threatens to intensify gender-based violence by armed political actors. To causally identify the effects, we focus on geo-located panel data for Africa. Our outcomes of focus encompass direct killings, forced kidnappings, torture, and sexual violence. We find evidence that negative climate shocks exacerbate these measures of female-targeted civilian conflict. Our results do not seem to support an opportunity cost explanation for violence on behalf of male perpetrators. Instead, they appear most consistent with a behavioral response when negative climate shocks induce heightened aggressive reactions towards females. Indicators of societal female empowerment tend to mitigate this extreme gender-based violence exacerbated by climate change. This is in line with the notion that armed male actors engage in even more gender-based violence (induced by increased climate stress and vulnerability) in societies with gender-biased views and norms.

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[†]Vancouver School of Economics and CEPR

[‡]Vancouver School of Economics