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Climate case against TotalEnergies: a decisive hearing on the merits

Press release, Paris, February 18th – In the climate case brought by French NGOs Notre Affaire à Tous, Sherpa, ZEA, France Nature Environnement and the City of Paris against TotalEnergies, a crucial hearing will be held on February 19th and 20th at the Paris Judicial Court. For the first time in France, judges will examine whether a multinational oil and gas company can be legally required to reduce its fossil fuel production in line with climate objectives.

The case, brought in January 2020 by a coalition of French local authorities, alongside civil society organisations¹, [challenges](#) TotalEnergies' continued expansion of oil and gas production despite long-standing scientific knowledge of its role in driving climate change.

After six long years of proceedings, delayed by TotalEnergies' delaying tactics, a decisive hearing is finally being held on the merits of the case. This hearing will provide an opportunity to discuss the climate risks resulting from the oil and gas group's activities and to assess whether the measures put in place to prevent them are adequate. French IPCC members Valérie Masson-Delmotte and Céline Guivarch will also be heard by the judges.

A fossil fuel expansion strategy incompatible with the Paris Agreement

The group presents itself as a “major player in the energy transition” and displays its “ambition” to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. [Already convicted in October 2025 for greenwashing](#), TotalEnergies nevertheless continues to base its strategy and economic model on the development of fossil fuels.

The company is **one of the 20 largest historical emitters** of greenhouse gases and one of the 10 largest oil and gas companies². Far from committing to reducing its hydrocarbon production, TotalEnergies plans to increase it by 3% per year, maintaining at least two-thirds of its investments in fossil fuels until 2030³. It is **linked to the largest number of new fossil fuel projects in the world**—including at least 30 “carbon bombs” representing 70 billion tons of CO₂ equivalent—more than half of the global carbon budget remaining to limit warming to 1.5°C⁴. However, according to scientific consensus⁵, **no new fossil fuel projects should be launched** if we are to meet the Paris Agreement targets and limit global warming to 1.5°C.

Legal action taken against the company's inaction to force it to comply with its climate obligations

¹ The initial coalition initially comprised five associations and 14 local authorities. Only the City of Paris was recognized as having an interest in taking action.

² https://carbonmajors.org/site/data/000/027/Carbon_Majors_Launch_Report.pdf

³ [TotalEnergies' press release, September 2025](#).

⁴ <http://CarbonBombs.org> - TotalEnergies' profile page.

⁵ IEA, Net Zero Roadmap: A Global Pathway to Keep the 1.5 °C Goal in Reach, 2023 Update 2023; IPCC, Summary for Policymakers, Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report 2023.

The legal action against TotalEnergies is primarily based on [France's 2017 Duty of Vigilance Law](#), requiring large French companies to identify risks and prevent human rights and environmental abuses resulting from their activities and those of their subsidiaries. This is the first time that judges have been called upon to rule on the application of the duty of vigilance in relation to climate change.

In addition, the case is also based on **Article 1252 of the French Civil Code**, which provides a preventive mechanism under French civil liability law, allowing any person to take legal action to prevent damage to the environment.

The stakes are high: the court could compel the company, if necessary under financial penalty, to rapidly reduce its emissions across all its activities (exploration, extraction, production, and use of its products) and to adopt the necessary measures, such as the termination of new oil and gas projects.

A global movement to end the impunity of the carbon majors

The hearing comes at a moment of rapid acceleration in **global climate litigation**⁶. Courts increasingly recognise that climate change threatens fundamental rights and that both **states and major private actors** have legal obligations to prevent climate harm.

This case against TotalEnergies is part of an international movement of climate litigation aimed at recognizing the responsibility of large, high-emitting companies—the carbon majors—for their major contribution to climate change, following the example of the [Shell case in the Netherlands](#).

"This case reminds us that the justice system has a key role to play in ensuring the effectiveness of the duty of vigilance and requiring multinational oil companies, such as TotalEnergies, to contribute to the achievement of the Paris Agreement's goals" - NAAT, Sherpa, and France Nature Environnement

"Air pollution is still killing people in Paris, mainly because of fossil fuel industries such as Total. Since 2014, we have reduced air pollution by 50% and are investing heavily to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. It is time for these companies to be held accountable." - Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris

Resources : [Press kit](#).

Press contacts

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⁶ Recent landmark rulings and advisory opinions include: *Urgenda* (Supreme Court of the Netherlands), *Shell* (Hague Court of Appeal), *Klimaatzaak* (Brussels Court of Appeal), *Klimaseniorinnen* (European Court of Human Rights), and advisory opinions issued in 2025 by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR).