

# TOTAL & CLIMATE CHANGE



→ Formal notice served

19 JUNE 2019

→ Civil lawsuit filed

28 JANUARY 2020

## THE ISSUE

On 28 January 2020, the multinational company Total was taken to court in an effort to force it to take the necessary measures to drastically reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Up to that point, there had been no substantial change in Total's climate commitments despite the publication of a second vigilance plan in March 2019 and a number of exchanges with Total's management, including a meeting with its chairman and CEO, Patrick Pouyanné. Total's climate ambitions are clearly not in line with the 1.5°C trajectory for global warming, which is the only one that is truly consistent with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. This is the first climate litigation case in France aimed at raising the climate ambitions of a multinational oil company.

## ACTORS

The case against Total has been brought by 14 local authorities in France, together with the associations Notre Affaire à Tous, Sherpa, ZEA, Eco Maires and France Nature Environnement (FNE).

1 Arcueil, Bayonne, Bègles, Bize-Minervois, Champneuville, Centre Val de Loire, Correns, Est Ensemble Grand Paris, Grenoble, La Possession, Mouans-Sartoux, Nanterre, Sevrans et Vitry-le-François.



\*Sherpa



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Further reading

[Action en justice contre Total](#), Notre Affaire à Tous  
[Total, the climate chaos strategy](#), Notre Affaire à Tous,

May 2019

## CASE DESCRIPTION

Given the State's failure to regulate multinationals, particularly in the area of climate change, these local authorities and associations are asking the Nanterre court to order Total – which is responsible for approximately 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions – to acknowledge the risks generated by its activities and to commit to a trajectory compatible with limiting global warming to 1.5°C. **Paul Mougeolle, from the association Notre Affaire à Tous**, says, "A study carried out by Notre Affaire à Tous shows that Total is among the worst performers of the companies listed on the CAC 40 in terms of climate impact mitigation. This is another reason to force the French oil multinational, whose direct and indirect emissions are higher than those of France, to carry out its energy transition."

According to **Florence Denier Pasquier, vice president of France Nature Environnement**, "The case brought against the Total group is consistent with all the legal actions already taken by FNE, both locally and nationally, against climate-destroying projects. This litigation is a powerful opportunity to measure the real scope of the law on the duty of vigilance in the light of the judge's decisions. Ultimately, of course, we are demanding, along with some fifteen local authorities, that the Total group put an end to these climate-destroying activities. It is time to stop talking and start acting: that is the message that must be sent to this group and to all the stakeholders."

**Eric Piolle, mayor of Grenoble**, adds, "In Grenoble, the effects of climate change are already being felt: by 2050, Grenoble residents will experience three months of heatwaves every year, and snow will continue to disappear in winter. Glaciers are melting; mountains are eroding. Our cities are on the front line, and so it is also through them that change must come. On a daily basis, we are taking steps to anticipate, limit and adapt to climate change. Together, we also have a responsibility to push the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases to set an example."

Last December, the subprefecture of Verdun (north-eastern France) opposed the decision of the commune of Champneuville to join the lawsuit against Total, illustrating the State's complicity in climate inertia and the need to have recourse to the law. According to **Daniel Lefort, mayor of Champneuville**, "Contrary to what is written in the prefecture's informal appeal, our deliberation is not a militant or political deliberation but a citizen deliberation. The action taken by our commune (alongside other local authorities and associations) is a substitute for the failings of the State, which allows the largest greenhouse gas emitters to disregard their duty of vigilance."

According to **Sandra Cossart, director of the Sherpa association**, which fought hard to have the law on the duty of vigilance adopted in France, "This law specifically requires companies to prevent the risks of human rights and environmental abuses caused by their activities, and to do so in an appropriate manner. Total is legally obliged to identify the risks resulting from its contribution to global warming and to take the necessary measures to reduce its emissions."

