

**The Case of the Century (l’Affaire du Siècle) : Greenpeace France, Oxfam France, Notre Affaire à Tous**

## **Unprecedented in the EU: citizens affected by extreme weather take French State to court over lack of adaptation to climate change**

*Today, in the first legal case of its kind in the European Union, 14 citizens affected by extreme weather, associations and climate organizations—including Oxfam France, Greenpeace France, and Notre Affaire à Tous who initiated The Case of the Century (l’Affaire du Siècle)<sup>1</sup>—are launching an unprecedented legal action against the French State. They accuse it of failing in its obligation to protect all citizens from the impacts of climate change.*



The 14 co-petitioners. Photo credit: L’Affaire du Siècle

### **France: vulnerable and still without an effective adaptation strategy**

In France, the impacts of climate change are already being deeply felt: nearly two out of three people are highly exposed to climate risks<sup>2</sup>, and a quarter of the population lives in flood-prone areas<sup>3</sup>. Half of all individual homes are at risk of cracking because of the shrink-swell phenomenon of clay soils<sup>4</sup>.

France’s *National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (PNACC-3)*, unveiled by the government in March 2025, falls significantly short of what is needed. The plan lacks dedicated funding<sup>5</sup>, a binding legal framework, or any rigorous monitoring. It also lacks concrete risk prevention and management measures, and fails to take into account social and regional inequalities that increase the exposure of

<sup>1</sup> The Case of the Century (L’Affaire du Siècle) succeeded in having the French state condemned for climate inaction in 2021. [https://laffairedu siecle.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/20210302\\_EN-CP-Jugement-ADS.pdf](https://laffairedu siecle.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/20210302_EN-CP-Jugement-ADS.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.statistiques.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/les-effets-du-changement-climatique-en-france-synthese-des-connaissances-en-2023?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.statistiques.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/les-effets-du-changement-climatique-en-france-synthese-des-connaissances-en-2023?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>3</sup> [https://portail.documentation.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/exl-php/document-affiche/mte\\_recherche\\_avancee/OUVRE\\_DOC/268?fic=cge00000125.pdf](https://portail.documentation.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/exl-php/document-affiche/mte_recherche_avancee/OUVRE_DOC/268?fic=cge00000125.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.franceassureurs.fr/wp-content/uploads/le-risque-secheresse-et-son-impact-sur-les-habitations-15-novembre-2022-web.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Out of 310 proposed actions, only 48 have been subject to cost estimation or budget evaluation

vulnerable groups to climate hazards. As such, the plan fails to guarantee protection for the entire population in the face of the inevitable and growing impacts of climate breakdown.

### **People affected by extreme weather at the heart of an unprecedented lawsuit**

For the first time in a European Union country, citizens directly affected by the impacts of climate change are taking their government to court for failing to adapt to climate change.

This landmark lawsuit is being spearheaded by people from all over France who are facing a range of problems directly induced by climate change: cracked houses caused by the shrink-swell of clay soils, difficulties accessing water, heatwaves, floods, and agricultural losses. Some of them face multiple layers of inequality and are all the more affected because they are people with disabilities, residents of working-class neighborhoods and overseas territories, or members of the Traveller community. These individuals, along with their associations and the three organizations that led *The Case of the Century* (Greenpeace France, Oxfam France and Notre Affaire à Tous) have decided to take legal action against the French State, which is failing to adequately protect them from these climate risks, in an effort to compel it to act.

“Every time it rains, we panic! Since nothing has changed, we tell ourselves we’re going to relive this nightmare all over again,” said Jérôme Sergent, whose farm in Rumilly, in the Pas-de-Calais region, was flooded eight times in just four months between November 2023 and March 2024.

“Being poor in Mayotte doesn’t just mean living below the poverty line like 77 percent of the population; it also means working hard to be able to afford water that’s safe to drink... but above all it means suffering from thirst because store shelves are empty, and our taps are dry,” said Racha Mousdikoudine, who has endured numerous water shortages in Mayotte.

The experiences of people stricken by climate disasters show numerous violations of fundamental human rights: the right to life, the right to health, and the right to housing. The co-petitioners demand that the French State be legally required to adopt concrete and ambitious prevention and protection measures, and that these take into account the specific vulnerabilities of certain groups (people living in poverty, with illnesses or disabilities, those marginalized because of their gender, origin, class, or age, as well as people living in overseas territories and working-class areas, which have been largely overlooked in France’s climate change adaptation strategies).

The co-petitioners represent those affected daily by impacts of climate change and assert their right to live in a country that protects the lives, health, security, and well-being of its population. This lawsuit serves as a stark reminder: the State has a duty to protect its citizens. If it fails to take the necessary measures, it must be held accountable in a court of law.

### **The legal basis of the case before the Council of State**

Brought before the Council of State, this lawsuit is not aimed at obtaining personal compensation for the co-petitioners affected by climate change, but at compelling the state to strengthen its adaptation policies and take concrete and effective measures to protect and support the entire population against climate risks. It is based on a *recours pour excès de pouvoir* (action for abuse of power), which allows the legality of an administrative act deemed insufficient—in this case, the *PNACC-3*—, to be challenged.

The lawsuit is based on the State’s general obligation to adapt to climate change, as derived from constitutional texts—particularly the *Environmental Charter*— and reinforced by international law, European law, and the law of the Council of Europe. It provides a detailed account of the shortcomings of the *PNACC-3* and related sectoral policies, particularly in terms of flood management, tackling the effects of shrink-swell phenomenon of clay soils, securing access to water, protection against heatwaves, and agricultural loss prevention.

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### **Notes to Editors**

[Download the full press kit](#) on the lawsuit for further information (co-petitioners’ profiles, lawsuit details, background on the *PNACC-3* and the risks considered).

Download the full selection of [press photos](#).

### **Lawsuit Process and Next Steps**

The lawsuit follows several steps, beginning immediately with an initial request submitted to the State, urging the government to revise the third National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (*PNACC-3*) and implement a set of measures to ensure and strengthen France's adaptation to climate change. This step is crucial as it gives the State an opportunity to act and protect its citizens. Legal proceedings will be formally brought before the the Council of State if the legal deadline of two months expires without a satisfactory response from the State—an outcome that, given past inaction, is highly likely.

The 161-page request, detailing the State's obligations and the shortcomings of its adaptation policies, is [available for consultation](#).

### **List of the 14 co-petitioners (individuals and associations):**

Jean-Jacques Bartholome, Salma Chaoui, Marie Le Mélédo, Jean-Raoul Plaussu-Monteil, Jérôme Sergent, Association Nationale des Gens du Voyage Citoyens (represented by William Acker), Association Urgence Maisons Fissurées (represented by Mohamed Benyahia), Ghatt'up (represented by Rania Daki), Locataires Ensemble (represented by Salim Poussin), MIRAMAP (represented by Evelyne Boulongne and Florent Sebban), Mayotte A Soif (represented by Racha Mousdikoudine), Notre Affaire à Tous, Greenpeace France, Oxfam France.

The organizations behind *The Case of the Century (L'Affaire du Siècle)*—Notre Affaire à Tous, Greenpeace France, and Oxfam France—are key stakeholders in this lawsuit, providing legal support, expertise, and critical visibility to the climate victims and their testimonies.

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