

→ Formal Notice

May 9, 2022

→ Court summons

February 23, 2023

ISSUES

The case takes place against the backdrop of the conflict in Yemen. Since 2015, a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has joined the armed conflict between the government of President Hadi and the Houthi armed group, which has controlled parts of Yemen since 2014. In this context, numerous human rights violations are being committed by the security forces set up by the coalition and Emirati soldiers, in particular detention, enforced disappearances and acts of torture.

The Balhaf site, where the events in this case took place, has been designated by the UN as part of a network of detention centres in southern Yemen

ACTORS

Two victims, along with MENA Rights Group, a Swiss organisation for the defence of human rights in the MENA region, initiated the lawsuit against the French company TotalEnergies.

TotalEnergies holds a 39.6% stake in Yemen LNG, which operates a gas liquefaction plant at the Balhaf site



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To go further



[Opération Shabwa - La France et Total en guerre au Yémen ? \(2019\)](#)
[Le Monde, "Un site de Total utilisé comme prison au Yémen", 7 novembre 2019](#)

[Mena Rights Group, 23 février 2023](#)

CASE DESCRIPTION

The case stems from statements made by two men and collected by MENA Rights Group. The two men stated that they had been secretly detained and tortured by Emirati forces at the Balhalf plant. The Balhalf plant was operated by Yemen LNG until 2015, when it was decided to halt production due to growing instability around the site. The Yemeni government then requisitioned the plant and the Emirati armed forces began to control the site and use it as a detention centre. The two men who testified were allegedly taken there and tortured for several weeks in 2018 and 2019, before both being released.

On the basis of these testimonies, in May 2022 MENA Rights Group sent TotalEnergie a formal notice detailing the various human rights violations committed at the Balhalf plant of which it was aware. Its request was based on the existence of breaches of the French Law on the Duty of Vigilance. TotalEnergie responded to the formal notice by stating that it did not exercise exclusive control over the Yemen LNG entity and was therefore not subject to the obligations of the Law on the Duty of Vigilance concerning it.

TotalEnergies had already declared that it did not hold a majority stake in the plant, that it had no direct involvement there and that it had no information about the coalition's actions in the requisitioned areas.

In 2023, following the formal notice, the two victims and MENA Rights Group formally summoned TotalEnergies before the Paris judicial court on the basis of the French Law on the Duty of Vigilance. They request the court to hold TotalEnergies liable for failing to meet its obligations to identify and prevent human rights violations committed on the Balhalf site belonging to Yemen LNG. They also request the court to order the multinational to include the Balhalf site in its future vigilance plans and to take all necessary preventive measures to prevent this type of abuse from occurring in the future.

