

TOTAL IN UGANDA



→ Formal notice

June 24, 2019

→ Court Summons

October 23, 2019

→ Dismissal order (summary proceedings)

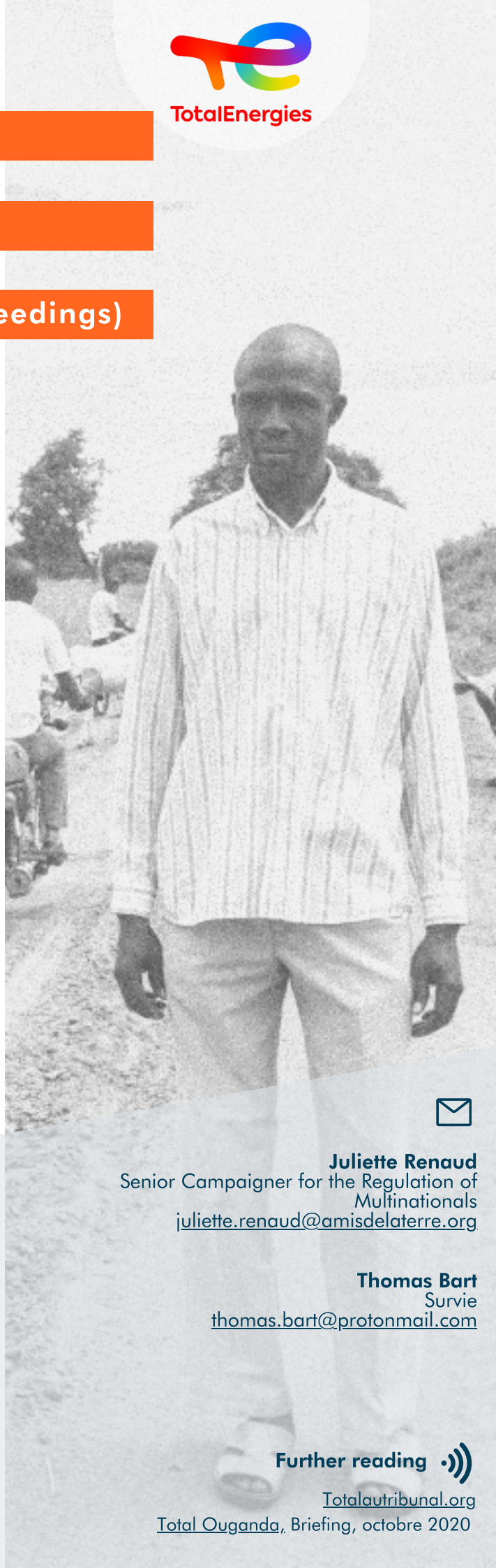
February 28, 2023

ISSUES

In June 2019, the multinational oil company Total was given formal notice for failing to comply with its legal obligations to prevent human rights abuses and environmental damage in the context of its Tilenga oil mega-project in Uganda. Total rejected the accusations outright, and the organisations took the company to court on 23 October 2019. This lawsuit is the very first to be filed under the French law on the duty of vigilance. Given the social and environmental urgency of the situation, the NGOs filed the case with the interim relief judge after failing to see any improvements on the ground since the formal notice they sent to the oil giant at the end of June 2019. Indeed, they have condemned the increased pressure being put on the populations at risk of forcible eviction and the NGOs that support them.

ACTORS

This lawsuit against Total has been filed by two French NGOS – Friends of the Earth France and Survie – and four Ugandan organisations – AFIEGO, CRED, NAPE/Friends of the Earth Uganda and NAVODA.



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Further reading 

Totalautribunal.org
TotalOuganda.org, Briefing, octobre 2020

CASE DESCRIPTION

The field survey conducted by the six organisations shows that this mega-oil project involves: – the expropriation of several tens of thousands of people who have already lost or will lose their homes, farmland and crops, in exchange for patently inadequate compensation that they are being coerced into accepting, often under pressure and intimidation; – considerable risks to biodiversity and water resources, as the project is located largely within the Murchison Falls National Park and includes a pipeline network that will pass under the Nile and through ecologically sensitive areas in a region characterised by a high prevalence of earthquakes; – a clear impact on the climate, with production of around 200,000 barrels per day and the world’s longest (electrically) heated pipeline to transport viscous oil 1445 km to a port in Tanzania.

Thomas Bart, a Survie activist who coordinated the investigation on the ground, states, “The disastrous impacts of this project are already cruelly apparent for the thousands of people whose land and homes are being seized, and for the exceptional biodiversity of this region of Uganda. There is a serious short-term threat to the ecosystems through which this giant pipeline will pass. This project must be urgently stopped. If we consider the overall risks of this pipeline, we are talking about tens of thousands of people who would be affected by the project.”

Juliette Renaud, Senior Campaigner for the Regulation of Multinationals at Friends of the Earth France, explains, “Total has acted with impunity for too long. We hope that this legal action will mark a turning point. Beyond the urgent need to take action against this disgraceful project, this first legal case is also about ensuring fair acknowledgment of the real content of the new duty of vigilance that this law imposes on multinationals. They can no longer hide behind mere statements of intent. A long-awaited first case law on this issue could set a precedent for many other cases. We will therefore defend the application of the letter and spirit of this law, which aims to strengthen the fight against the impunity of multinationals.”

Dickens Kamugisha, Director of AFIEGO, says, “The situation on the ground is very intense, with thousands of people already deprived of access to their livelihoods, and tens of thousands more soon to be affected. It is very hard for us to defend people’s rights in the face of the injustices caused by oil companies like Total that continue to partner with our government. Our legal system does not allow us to stand up to a giant like Total. The cases we have filed in Uganda against the government and other oil companies are yielding no results, and NGOs like ours that challenge these economic interests have been attacked and threatened with closure by the government.”

The organisations are calling on people to join the tens of thousands who have already signed the online appeal: **Total, see you in court !**

