

UN experts challenge Saudi Aramco over climate change

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UN experts have written to oil firm Saudi Aramco over allegations that their activities are fuelling climate change-related negative impacts on human rights.

UN experts have written to oil firm Saudi Aramco and its financial backers challenging them on allegations that their activities are fuelling

climate change-related negative impacts on human rights.

A cache of correspondence was published Saturday on a United Nations human rights special procedures website, exactly two months after it was sent.

The letters said UN experts had received information "concerning Saudi Aramco's business activities... which are adversely impacting the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change".

The allegations accused Aramco of "maintained crude oil production, exploration for further oil and gas reserves, expansion into fossil fuel gas, and misrepresentation of information", the letters said.

"Such activities have negative impacts on the enjoyment of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment."

The letters to Aramco and its backers were sent by a number of experts including the UN working group on human rights and transnational corporations, as well as UN special rapporteurs dealing with rights and climate change; a clean and sustainable environment; management of hazardous substances; and on safe drinking water and sanitation.

The UN experts also alleged Aramco's activities appeared to be "contrary to the goals, obligations and commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change", which was signed in 2015 and set the ambitious target of limiting the world to a temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

'Largest emitter' claim

The UN experts claimed these activities were funded by Saudi Arabia's

Public Investment Fund, as well as 11 major international banks, investment banks and firms, which also received similar letters.

Letters also went to the home states of these companies: Britain, France, Japan, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

Some of these letters were made public on Saturday.

The letters asserted that fossil fuels account for more than 75 percent of [global greenhouse gas emissions](#), and cited reports claiming that over half of such emissions could be traced to 25 fossil fuel business enterprises, "with Saudi Aramco ranking as the largest greenhouse gas emitter".

"Therefore, through its historic emissions, it is alleged that Saudi Aramco has already significantly contributed to adverse climate change-related human rights impacts.

"The company's current exploitation of fossil fuels and proposed business plans will continue to cause adverse climate change-related human rights impacts."

UN experts are unpaid independent figures who do not speak for the UN but are mandated to report their findings to it.

'Significantly worsened' impacts

Aramco's "refusal to reduce its production of oil and gas—and continued exploration for more oil and gas—contributes to the risk of overshoot of the 1.5C carbon budget, with resultant significantly worsened climate change-related human rights impacts".

The letter asked for Aramco's observations on 10 points, within 60 days,

after which the letter and any response received would be made public.

No such reply from Aramco was on the UN [human rights](#) special procedures website early Sunday.

The largely state-owned Aramco is undertaking investments to ramp up national production capacity to 13 million barrels per day by 2027.

Aramco reported record profits totalling \$161.1 billion last year.

Aramco is the main source of revenue for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's sweeping economic and social reform program known as Vision 2030, which aims to shift the economy away from [fossil fuels](#).

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