

Climate Change Goes to Baku

Monday 18 December 2023, by [CHETERIAN Vicken](#) (Date first published: 15 December 2023).

It is of course difficult to predict how Azerbaijan might organize the COP29 in 2024. Azerbaijan is not known for its expertise in environmental matters, for innovations in fighting climate change. But Baku is historically associated with oil. Remember, in the year 1900 Baku produced half of the total global oil. Azerbaijan has expertise in hydrocarbon production and export even today over 90% of the total national exports are oil and gas.

During the last days of COP28 – the UN yearly meeting to save humanity from the changing climate by keeping it at 1.5 degrees Centigrade – announced that the next meeting will take place in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

“We are what we do, not what we say,” [said](#) COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber. “We must take the steps necessary to turn this agreement into tangible actions” and added: “transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner ... so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science.”

[According](#) to the International Energy Agency, “global fossil fuel consumption subsidies doubled from the previous year to an all-time high of USD 1 trillion.” The International Monetary Fund puts “implicit and explicit” (direct and indirect) subsidies together as high as 7 trillion USD last [year](#). If those figures are too abstract, consider this: humanity is now pumping 101.8 million barrels of oil per day – this excludes coal and gas. And the energy consumption is increasing 2% annually.

Sultan Al Jaber, next to presiding COP28, is also the chief executive of the United Arab Emirates’ state oil company, Adnoc. There were some reports that the Emirati national oil and gas company had used the COP28 as an opportunity to target delegations to sign new hydrocarbon [deals](#).

If you enjoyed Dubai, you would fall in love with Baku.

Let’s Go to the Caspian Sea

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There is no environmentalist party in Azerbaijan. But there was a movement that started on December 12, 2022, by blocked the Lachin corridor in the name of saving the planet, demanding an end to mining activities in Nagorno-Karabakh. Neither Azerbaijani police, nor the Russian “peacekeepers” intervened to chase them away and open the road. In fact, the demonstrators were Azerbaijani government agents themselves, and blocked the Lachin until April 2023 when they were replaced by the Azerbaijani military. Azerbaijan has an official environmental [movement](#) which has

actively participated in starving the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The president of Azerbaijani Ilham Aliyev lacks negotiations skills. Even at the height of negotiations with Armenia and de facto leaders of Karabakh, he launched his third war just this September, attacking Nagorno-Karabakh, causing hundreds of victims, and ethnically cleansing Karabakh from its indigenous population. Ilham Aliyev also lacks skills in conflict resolution. He is on the record [saying](#): “How to achieve peace by military means? (...) We proved that there is a military solution to the conflict. So, the conflict is resolved.” Aliyev thinks war is peace, and peace is war.

There are also genuine environmental protests in Azerbaijan. In June, inhabitants of Soyudlu village located in remote mountain area, in protested mining activities of British operated Anglo Asian Mining, which polluted the water sources of the village. Azerbaijani authorities sent the police to repress the villagers and imposed a siege on the village. In Azerbaijan, fake ecologists are government agents, while real environmental protests are beaten and sent to [prison](#).

Mukhtar Babayev is Azerbaijan’s Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources and was quoted of saying that his country is “fully committed to global efforts” to fight climate change, “that by 2020 his country will have 30% of its electricity based on renewables, and that “the liberated areas” will be a carbon neutral [zone](#).

One of the few independent media that reported about the police repression in Soyudlu is Abzas Media. Its director Ulvi Hasanli was arrested on November 20 and “beaten or ill-treated” [according](#) to Amnesty International , and remains in prison until now. Three other journalists of Abzas Media, namely Mahammad Kekalov, Sevinj Vagifgizi, and Nargiz Absalamov were also arrested since, as well as Teymur Karimov the director of the independent Kanal11, and Aziz Orujov, head of Kanal13. On December 13, the authorities arrested Hafiz Babaly, another independent journalist investigating government corruption. In a matter of few days before and after the announcement of Azerbaijan winning the COP29, three directors of independent media, and several other journalists, were sent to jail.

To prepare for COP29 Azerbaijan is eliminating all traces of independent journalism. There will be no journalist left who will not repeat the propaganda of Mukhtar Babayev, to remind him that the entire economy of Azerbaijan contributes to climate change and not to resolve the problem, and that “carbon neutrality” will be achieved on territories where his government has killed and deported the entire population.

In diplomatic field, Azerbaijan is well known for its “Caviar Diplomacy”: millions of dollars distributed abroad to buy influence via foreign politicians, which succeeded to “silence the Council of Europe”. (https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_131.pdf)

In July, Azerbaijani authorities arrested Professor of economics Gubad Ibadoglu, a renowned Azerbaijani economist, who had dare to research and write about corruption in Azerbaijani politics and energy sector.

Climate change has already arrived in Baku.

Rainfall is decreasing because of climate change, and in the last century 50% of the glaciers have disappeared.

[1] The Caspian Sea level dropped by one meter, and by the end of the century it is projected to drop further between 9 to 18 meters, and lose 23% to 34% of its surface area. [2] In certain parts of Azerbaijan, in Shekhi for example, an increase of average temperature of 1.5 has already been recorded in comparison with 1970 average temperatures, and according to various models by the

end of the century average temperature increases might be between 4-6 degrees C. By the end of the century, climate change will make much of Azerbaijan's lowlands unliveable and unsuitable for agriculture. [3]

If this is a "victorious nation", then how might defeat look like?

Vicken Cheterian

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P.S.

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<https://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/29570/climate-change-goes-to-baku>

Footnotes

[1] Nicolas Ahouissoussi et al (eds.), Building Resilience to Climate Change in South Caucasus Agricultural, Washington D. C., The World Bank, 2014, page 67.

[2] Matthias Prange, Thomas Wilke, and Frank P. Wesselingh, "The other side of sea level change", Nature, 1:69 (2020): <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43247-020-00075-6>

[3] Fourth National Communication to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources Republic of Azerbaijan/UNDP Azerbaijan, 2021: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/FNC%20report.pdf>