

COP29 - Climate of Justice Initiative

Baku, February 20, 2024

As is known, the 29th session of the UN Global Conference on Climate Change (COP29 - Conference of the Parties) is scheduled for November 2024 in Azerbaijan. The 2-week conference will host tens of thousands of foreign guests, including world leaders, high-ranking politicians, heads of international organizations, and representatives from media and NGOs.

COP29 will be the first global conference held in Azerbaijan after it acquires territorial integrity and the most significant international event since its independence. Beyond environmental concerns, the hosting of COP29 holds substantial political and economic significance for the country.

However, Azerbaijan, which will be hosting a significant global event like COP29, is experiencing the following problems:

1. For many years, Azerbaijan has been one of the most problematic countries in Europe in terms of political and civil liberties. Especially in the last 15 years, it has become common for politicians, journalists, and social activists to be arrested on false charges.
2. During this period, regressive amendments were made to the Azerbaijani Constitution, laws providing access to information, and NGO activities. New legislation restricting media and political party activities has also been enacted despite objections from the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe.
3. According to the 2021 Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, Azerbaijan scored 30 out of 100. It ranked 128th out of the 168 countries reviewed, while in 2022, the country fell to 157th out of 180 countries and scored 23 out of 100. In 2023, the country's score stayed the same.
4. Gender-based violence against women and domestic violence are among the most acute problems in the country. The government does not fulfill its obligations under international agreements in this regard and does not produce effective measures to combat these problems.
5. In March 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic began, the land borders of Azerbaijan were closed for citizens' movement, with a permit system enforced. Unlike other countries that have reopened their borders as the pandemic has been brought under control, Azerbaijan has kept the land border closed to citizens' movement and foreign citizens' arrival since June 2022, citing COVID-19 concerns. The land border has remained closed for two years.
6. According to the 2021 Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, Azerbaijan scored 30 out of 100 and ranked 128th out of the 168 countries reviewed, while in 2022, the country fell to 157th out of 180 countries and scored 23 out of 100. In 2023, the score of the country is not changed.

7. Within the Paris Climate Agreement framework, Azerbaijan committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 35% compared to 1990 levels by 2030. The result was already achieved due to the mass closure of industrial enterprises in the 1990s. After joining the Paris Climate Agreement, the government did not implement a systematic policy to monitor and reduce GHG emissions; on the contrary, climate emissions have continued to rise in recent years, and as a result of oil production, leading to significant pollution of lands and watersheds, including the Absheron Peninsula.β
8. Water scarcity exacerbated by the climate crisis has been further compounded by the unfair distribution of water resources, restrictions on access to water resources for communities and small farmers favoring oligarch entrepreneurs, rapid expansion of irrigated farmland, and inefficient infrastructure management.

Given these challenges, a group of Non-Governmental Organizations operating in Azerbaijan consider COP29 as an opportunity to promote civil liberties, public participation, and environmental justice in Azerbaijan, and decided to establish the *COP29 - Climate of Justice Initiative* to address the following joint analytical, advocacy, and collaborative activities:

- A. Release of journalists, civic and political activists arrested with politically motivated charges.
- B. Enacting amendments to laws regarding NGOs and grants to facilitate the freedom of association and public participation.
- C. Adopting the Anticorruption Action Plan, which should consider assessing the situation, specific, measurable actions, budget, and timeline at the Parliament level with the participation of civil society organizations. Developing the assessment of reporting systems for implementation of activities.
- D. Ratification of the Istanbul Convention to combat violence against women.
- E. Provision of free movement of citizens from the land borders of the country.
- F. Making more ambitious commitments and developing a road map for 2030 under the Paris Climate Agreement.
- G. Development and implementation of an action plan for cleaning oil-contaminated areas by 2030.
- H. Development of a strategy and action plan aimed at achieving significant progress towards fair and efficient use of water resources by 2030.

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