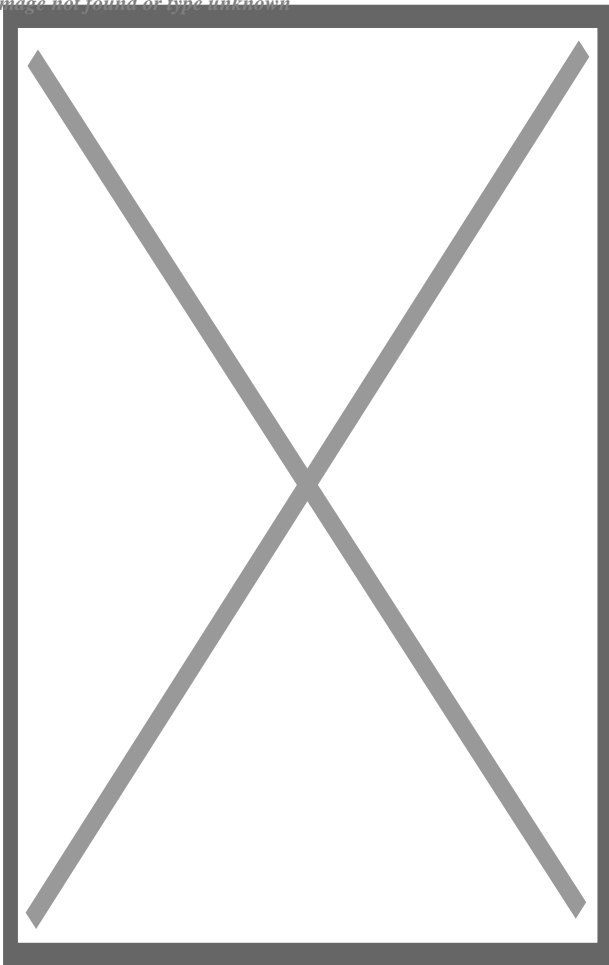


# *Azerbaijan leader accuses France of colonial crimes in COP29 speech*

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Baku, November 14 (RHC)-- French Ecology Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher has pulled out of the COP29 climate talks in Azerbaijan after its President Ilham Aliyev accused France of carrying out colonialist “crimes” in New Caledonia, in the latest diplomatic spat between the two countries.

Aliyev, who is hosting the COP29 United Nations climate talks in Baku, drew loud applause from delegates of some Pacific island nations after a combative speech in which he lambasted Paris over the response to protests that in May rocked the Pacific archipelago ruled by France.

“The crimes of France in its so-called overseas territories would not be complete without mentioning the recent human rights violations,” said Aliyev. “The regime of President [Emmanuel] Macron killed 13 people and wounded 169... during legitimate protests by the Kanak people in New Caledonia,” he added.

Pannier-Runacher quickly hit back, telling lawmakers in Paris that she was cancelling her trip to the talks in protest at Aliyev’s “deplorable” speech. She called his attack “unacceptable... and beneath the dignity of the presidency of the COP.” It was also a “flagrant violation of the code of conduct” for running United Nations climate talks, she added.

The minister also criticised Aliyev for his “equally unacceptable comments on fossil fuels” after he described his country’s vast oil and gas reserves as a “gift of God”.

Despite her pullout, Pannier-Runacher said the team of French negotiators in Baku would not relent in their efforts to do a deal “to protect the planet and its populations” from climate change. Relations between Paris and Baku are frosty over France’s longtime support for its archrival Armenia, which Azerbaijan defeated in a lightning military offensive last year when it retook the breakaway Armenian-populated region of Nagorno-Karabakh – leading to the displacement of more than 100,000 Armenians.

Paris this year accused Azerbaijan of interfering in its domestic politics by stoking tensions in its overseas territories and dependencies, including New Caledonia. Azerbaijan denies interference, but Aliyev on Wednesday rounded on France for holding Corsica and its far-flung overseas island territories “under the colonial yoke.”

Aliyev has ruled his gas-rich country for more than two decades since the death of his father, Azerbaijan’s Soviet-era Communist leader and former KGB general Heydar Aliyev. In the run-up to the climate summit, Azerbaijan was widely denounced for its human rights record and repression of political opposition.

Aliyev in his speech attacked the European Union and the Council of Europe human rights body, calling them “symbols of political corruption that share responsibility with the government of President Macron for the killings of innocent people”.

He also said that “all political prisoners of France must be liberated”.

Aliyev accused EU foreign policy chief Josep Borell of having compared the rest of the world to a jungle while Europe was a garden. “If we are the jungles,” he declared, “then stay away from us and don’t interfere in our affairs.”

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<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/369737-azerbaijan-leader-accuses-france-of-colonial-crimes-in-cop29-speech>



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