A Shameful History of Veolia

In May 1998 Veolia (known as SARP/Vivendi at the time) released orange clouds of toxic gas from their waste plant in Killamarsh, near Sheffield, into the local community. A campaign by local residents forced the plant to close in 2002 See: *Two Cloud Too Many* by John Moran. Also https://www.safetyonline.com/doc/sarp-uk-ltd-fined-120000-for-waste-and-health-0001 and Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veolia

In 2009 Veolia's plant in West Carrollton, Ohio, USA flammable vapours released into the atmosphere found an ignition source, leading to an explosion and fire that seriously injured two workers and damaged twenty residences.
https://www.csb.gov/veolia-environmental-services-flammable-vapor-explosion-and-fire/Veolia Environmental Services Flammable Vapor Explosion and Fire

UKWIN reported: "Veolia explosion causes serious injuries":
https://ukwin.org.uk/2009/05/05/veolia-explosion-causes-serious-injuries/ this report also has other Veolia incidents. And "Veolia (ES) UK Ltd, which runs a hazardous waste treatment facility in Bootle, has today (13 January 2009) been fined £101,000 for an incident in April 2006 which caused the release of toxic fumes." A chemical explosion closed motorways:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/lancashire/8404129.stm

13 February 2012 FOE reported: French company Veolia Environmental and Spanish company Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas (FCC) – as the joint venture PROACTIVA – are accused of denying access to basic services such as water, sanitation and waste management to large parts of the local population in the Colombian Carribean. https://friendsoftheearth.eu/press-release/eu-and-business-on-trial-for-crimes-in-latin-america/

In June 2012 a New York jury slapped a $954.6 million fine on Vivendi for fraud.
https://www.reuters.com/article/lifestyle/us-jury-slaps-9546-million-judgment-against-vivendi-idUSBRE85O1AH/

In 2013 Veolia received the Pinocchio Award from Friends of the Earth in the category 'One for all, all for me' given to the company with the most aggressive policies on landgrabbing, or exploitation or destruction of natural resources.

Veolia is implicated in water privatization projects in India. It pretends to be a hero bringing water to the poor, whilst on the ground the reality is a lot different: price increases, delays, and conflicts with communities and local officials.
https://friendsoftheearth.eu/news/veolia-areva-and-auchan-win-2013-pinocchio-awards/

In January 2014 Veolia imported 150 tonnes of chemical weapons from Syria to be burned at their High Temperature Incinerator in Ellesmere Port. This "caused uproar" in the town. Dangerous chemicals imported from all over the world continue to be burned.
Liverpool Echo 24 Jan 2014: https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/syria-weapons-chemicals-destroyed-ellesmere-6519753

In 2015 Veolia withdrew from the Israeli market after a campaign against its involvement in the occupied territories and illegal settlements. Veolia had been the subject of a seven-year boycott from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, campaigning against Israel, 'until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights'. The United Nations Human Rights Council had described Veolia's involvement in one project, the Jerusalem Light Rail as 'requiring the confiscation of… Palestinian land and demolitions of homes and businesses'.

https://resource.co/article/veolia-cuts-losses-israel-after-boycott-10446



June 2017 Mexico: NGOs demand cancellation of Veolia´s waste disposal plant due to possible negative environmental & social impacts
https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/mexico-ngos-demand-cancellation-of-veolia-s-waste-disposal-plant-due-to-possible-negative-environmental-social-impacts/

In early 2022 Veolia completed the acquisition (hostile takeover) of large parts of the business and contracts of its main competitor, Suez. Veolia and Suez: the New Face of the Private Water Giants. https://publicservices.international/resources/news/veolia-and-suez-the-new-face-of-the-private-water-giants?id=12766&lang=en

September 2022: “Campaigners rejoicing after plans for a controversial incinerator will not go to appeal.” Veolia’s application for a commercial incinerator in rural Wey Valley was refused by Hampshire County Council on February 23. https://www.haslemereherald.com/news/fact-or-fiction-campaigners-call-out-veolia-green-washing-195765
No Wey Incinerator action group. https://www.facebook.com/groups/3428128183872733/

In 2023 Global Witness reported on a Veolia “toxic landfill” in Colombia. They had acquired the landfill in 2019 two years after Colombian courts ordered a cleanup of arsenic, mercury and other contaminants which had infiltrated food and water sources of a nearby community. Infants began displaying “serious and novel afflictions, including cases of babies being born without a brain and dying at birth.”
The judicial order had not been carried out after six years, and local leaders who complained were threatened by paramilitary groups. https://globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/french-giant-veolia-

accused-of-buying-toxic-colombian-landfill-failed-to-address-the-risks-faced-by-environmental-defenders/

In 2024 the Veolia reported total revenues of $48.9 billion dollars – greater than the gross national product of countries such as Sudan and Bolivia. They have become the world's largest private enterprise focusing on water, energy, wastes and transportation. "...the French conglomerate is an international behemoth that puts profits over the environment and public health. The company's subsidiaries have been repeatedly sued and sanctioned by regulatory agencies over contaminated water, unlawful waste disposal and other violations."
'Veolia: A look at the track record of a mega-corporation':
https://thecoronadonews.com/2025/05/veolia-a-look-at-the-track-record-of-a-mega-corporation-operating-the-border-sewage-plant/
Veolia's interference in the political process is discussed here:
https://corporateaccountability.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CAI_TroubledWaters_Web-rev-2_FINAL.pdf (see extract in notes below)

In February 2025, Veolia paid out $53 million to the community of Flint, Michigan because of the poisoning of the water supply. Veolia told residents their water was safe despite privately acknowledging the potential for lead contamination. '"Lead is one of the most damning things you can do to a child in their entire life-course trajectory." In Flint, nearly 9,000 children were supplied lead-contaminated water for 18 months' https://corporateaccountability.org/blog/breaking-veolia-settles-flint-lawsuits-for-53-million/ Also: https://www.nrdc.org/stories/flint-water-crisis-everything-you-need-know#summary

September 2025: Unite the Union say: VEOLIA CLEAN UP YOUR ACT
"Veolia is a huge multinational corporation based in Paris. It runs Sheffield's bins and recycling service through a contract with the city council. Veolia is making huge profits from this contract – while the council teeters on the brink of bankruptcy. Veolia made £11.7 million in profit from Sheffield in 2023, while the council faces a budget shortfall of £18.1 million! Veolia makes £815 million a year in global profits – much of it coming from public contracts like Sheffield. As the council makes cuts to local services, Veolia is paying out millions to shareholders - £763 million in the past year, part-funded by its Sheffield profits."
Sign the petition at: https://www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns/veolia-clean-up-your-act#





Notes:
* “VEOLIA AND SUEZ—WHEN THE “SOLUTION” IS THE PROBLEM



Photo credit: United Workers Media Team

PHOTO: Hundreds of people gather at a rally in front of Baltimore’s City Hall. Community organizations, labor unions, and racial justice groups were among those challenging a potential contract between Veolia and the city of Baltimore.

In an attempt to make privatization more politically palatable and advance its commercial agenda, the private water industry is misleading public officials and communities by repackaging privatization as public-private partnerships. To implement these repackaged privatization models, transnational water corporations such as Veolia and Suez (and its U.S. subsidiary, United Water) rely not only on misleading marketing materials, but also on their ability to interfere with the governance of public water systems at the local, state, and federal level. This political interference is the precursor to privatization and seeks to: weaken the private sector’s greatest competitor, the public water sector; open up the water market and create business opportunities for private water corporations; and remove as many obstacles as possible to the profitability of private water corporations. In order to achieve these goals, the private water industry has interfered at the federal and state level of government in legislation that affects public water systems and the democratic governance of water. It has done so by promoting federal legislation that could put public water operators under pressure as it increases the competition for increasingly scarce public financial resources and pave the way for new water privatizations. The private water industry has interfered at the state level of government by lobbying to defeat proposed legislation that would increase the transparency and accountability of private water corporations.”