

DECLARATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ON THE CRISIS OF DEFORESTATION AND BURNING IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

On occasion of the seminar “ Deforestation and Burning in the Amazon: Trends, Dynamics and Solutions ” and COP 25 of the UN Convention on Climate Change

1. With seven million square kilometers shared by nine countries, the Amazon biome is home to the largest river basin and the largest rainforest on the planet. Together with its immense biological and cultural diversity, a characteristic of the Amazon is its fantastic capacity to function as a gigantic heart, pumping 20 trillion liters of water every day into the atmosphere. Through evapotranspiration, the forest creates 'flying rivers' that transport a huge amount of water vapor to other regions, helping maintain the equilibrium of the climate system of the South American continent and the entire planet. But this heart is being attacked by predatory activities that ignore their disastrous consequences for present and future generations, and for the planet's survival.
2. In recent months, a major leap in the rates of deforestation and burning in the Brazilian Amazon (home to two thirds of the biome) provoked surprise, outrage and protests in Brazil and around the world. Given this alarming scenario, the seminar “*Deforestation and Burning in the Amazon: Trends, Dynamics and Solutions*” was held in Brasilia on November 28th 2019, as an initiative of Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development (CMADS) in the Chamber of Deputies of the Brazilian Congress, with participation of parliamentarians, public institutions, scientists and civil society organizations. In this event, data and analyses on characteristics, causes and consequences of deforestation and burning in the Amazon were presented and debated, as well as challenges for overcoming problems within a perspective of social and environmental justice.¹ The main conclusions of the analyses and debates of this event include the following:

Numbers and their Consequences

3. According to official data from INPE (National Institute for Space Research), 9,762 km² were deforested in the Brazilian Amazon between August 2018 and July 2019, an increase of approximately 30% in relation to the previous period. Between August and October 2019, an additional 3.429 km² were identified as being under alert for deforestation, compared to 1,792 km² during the same period last year, an increase of 91%!² From January to August this year there were 46,825 active wildfire outbreaks in the Amazon biome, an increase of 111% over the same period last year. In August 2019 alone, 30,901 wildfires were recorded, an increase of 196% compared to August 2018 and the highest number in the last nine years. Between January and August 2019, the total area affected by wildfires was 4.3 million hectares, 71% higher than the average of the same months over the last ten years. Most of these wildfires were found to occur in newly deforested areas.³
4. In 2019, protected areas (Conservation Units and Indigenous Territories) and other public lands accounted for 41% of the total deforested area in the Brazilian Amazon. In federal protected areas, there was an 84% increase in deforestation over the previous year. This demonstrates the existence of a framework of incentives from the federal government for public land grabbing, disregarding the need to protect the environmental heritage of Brazilian citizens, for which it is responsible.⁴

5. Increased deforestation and burning in the Amazon, coupled with land grabbing and illegal exploitation of timber and other natural resources, is directly linked to increased acts of violence perpetrated against indigenous peoples, traditional communities and social movements. Violence that has gone unpunished in the vast majority of cases.
6. The consequences of deforestation and burning in the Amazon are immense, compromising the maintenance of the largest natural heritage of Brazilians, the well being of the population and the stability of the regional and global climate system. In 2019, cumulative deforestation reached 800,000 km² in the Brazilian Amazon, about 20% of the region's total original area, a point considered critical by many scientists. Consequences of deforestation and burning in the Amazon biome can already be observed with a shorter rainy season in parts of the Amazon, an intensified melting of glaciers in the Andes and a reduction in rainfall in other parts of the South American continent that directly impacts the people's lives and the economy, including Brazilian agribusiness. The continuation rising deforestation and burning in the Amazon, with the destruction of huge stocks of carbon stored in forests, places at serious risk Brazilian contributions to the fulfillment of the Paris Agreement, damaging global efforts to keep the average temperature increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The role of the current Brazilian government

7. The problem of indiscriminate deforestation in the Amazon has long existed, but a worsening scenario in 2019 is the direct result of statements, omissions and objective actions of the federal government. Contributing factors to an intensification of the environmental crisis in the Amazon, linked to the current federal government, include:
 - Public statements by the president and several of his ministers, associated with loosening enforcement of illegal acts, that have sent a clear signal of impunity and encouraged the practice of environmental crimes;⁵
 - Dismantling of the Ministry of the Environment and associated bodies, along with other public institutions responsible for environmental protection - through budgetary cuts,⁶ political persecution of public employees,⁷ elimination and undermining of institutional responsibilities, and appointment of individuals to senior positions who are disconnected from the environmental agenda and that often display conflicts of interest with sectors regulated by environmental agencies.
 - A refusal to identify, demarcate and formally recognize territories of indigenous peoples, *quilombolas* (descendants of African slaves) and other traditional populations that serve as true guardians of the forest, accompanied by initiatives to open up these lands for exploitation by mining companies, hydroelectric dams and agribusiness, in violation of the Federal Constitution;⁸
 - Paralysis of agrarian reform programs, linked to the expulsion of hundreds of family farmers in places such as Fazenda Palotina, in the municipality of Lábrea (southern part of Amazonas state) and the Nova Conquista encampment, in the municipality of Nova Mamoré, state of Rondônia.
 - Initiatives and support for backsliding on legal frameworks for environmental licensing of infrastructure, mining and agribusiness projects, with high risks of environmental impacts;⁹

- Attempts to publicly discredit technical institutions of the government responsible for monitoring and dissemination of environmental data, such as INPE - National Institute for Space Research;¹⁰
 - Abandonment of the Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon (PPCDAm), launched in 2004 and largely responsible for a decline of 83% in deforestation rates between 2004 and 2012; this plan should be in its fourth phase of implementation;
8. The criminalization of civil society organizations has been a practice adopted by the current government, to the point of directly accusing them of setting fires to Amazon forests, although the President himself declared on October 30th, in Saudi Arabia, that his rejection of previous public policies had created the 'potential' for an increase in forest fires in the Amazon.¹¹
 9. What is clear is that the Bolsonaro government - with false arguments that expressions of concern for the Amazon are a threat to Brazilian sovereignty in the region - is putting into place an articulated plan of destruction by stimulating deforestation, burning, devastation and looting of natural resources by illegal land grabbers, loggers and mining interests, including attacks on forest defenders that he considers to be 'obstacles' to the pursuit of his interests.
 10. This plan is part of an escalation of authoritarianism in the Amazon and attacks on democracy in Brazil that are becoming increasingly grave. This November began with the killing of indigenous leader Paulo Paulino Guajajara, a well-known guardian of the forest, and ended with the controversial arrest of members of a voluntary fire-fighting brigade in the Santarém region. The latter case included an attempt to criminalize one of the most respected civil society organizations in the Amazon, *Projeto Saúde e Alegria* (PSA) that has worked in the region of the Tapajós River for three decades. Without making any formal charges, state police invaded the headquarters of PSA, seizing documents and computers. Even when unmasked, the controversial imprisonment was utilized for a renewed attack on civil society organizations.

A Call to Action for the Amazon

11. Faced with such dramatic circumstances, it is essential that Brazilian society joins together and supports indigenous peoples, *quilombolas*, riverine peoples and other defenders to impede the destruction of the Amazon. The involvement of the Legislative and Judiciary branches of government, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, state governments, media outlets, and organizations such as the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), National Council of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), churches, business sectors and social movements is needed to not only halt rampant deforestation and wildfires, but also to stimulate policies and actions for an economy based on coexistence with nature and not on its destruction, recognizing and valuing the knowledge and wisdom of peoples of the forest.
12. It is necessary for the current government, members of Congress and the judiciary, business sectors and Brazilian society to understand the fundamental importance of the forest, to change the current trajectory of incentives and omission that result in devastation of the forest. The government and other institutions need to urgently adopt a responsible position, respecting the Constitution, laws and international agreements to which Brazil is a part, leading and supporting a range of public, private and civil society actors to confront this grave problem, including among other concrete actions:

- Resume the Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon (PPCDAM), ensuring adequate financial resources, transparency and participation of state and local governments, together with civil society organizations;
- Combat environmental crimes associated with public land grabbing, deforestation, burning and illegal exploitation of natural resources, through the resumption of the Inter-Ministerial Commission to Combat Environmental Crimes and Infractions - CICCIA, in force since 2009, including actions to recover forests in public lands that have been invaded by speculators (*grileiros*) and subjected to environmental devastation.
- Resume the identification, demarcation and ratification of indigenous territories, along with recognition of the territorial rights of *quilombo* communities and other traditional populations;
- Ensure continuity of agrarian reform, with investigation and punishment of responsible parties for assassinations and other acts of aggression against settled families and environmental defenders;
- Withdrawal of all proposed bills circulating in Congress that would result in backsliding on current legislation for environmental protection – regarding themes such as environmental licensing and exploitation of natural resources on indigenous lands - in line with a proposal recently presented by six former Ministers of the Environment to the Speaker of the House;
- Resume activities of the Amazon Fund, including reconstitution of its steering committee, guaranteeing effective participation of civil society organizations;
- Guarantee access to official data of the federal government that can facilitate control of deforestation by public agencies, including those at the state and municipal levels, as well as by private sector and civil society organization engaged in agendas to protect the Amazon;
- Revise Brazilian targets established under the Paris Agreement regarding greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions, with more ambitious commitments at COP 25 that effectively contribute to containing elevations of temperatures in the global climate system.

13. The defense of the Amazon should not be limited to Brazilians and other Amazonian countries; international society that benefits from its environmental services, especially through maintenance of the climate system, also has an important supporting role to play in efforts to protect the Amazon and the rights of its people. The societies of various countries, companies, financial institutions and governments, especially from the wealthier countries, need to urgently adopt concrete measures, inter alia, to:

- Implement effective mechanisms to ensure the importation of agribusiness, logging and mining commodities originates from strictly legal and certified areas, avoiding those characterized by exploitative practices of land grabbing, illegal deforestation and human rights violations;
- Guarantee that all investments in the Amazon contribute to ending deforestation and strengthening a low carbon economy that respects and values the cultures and livelihoods of local populations; blocking investments that increase risks of deforestation, violations of human

rights, and weakening of environmental legislation. Preventive measures should include due diligence, transparent monitoring and disclosure of the results of commitments.

- Contribute to efforts of governmental institutions and Brazilian society to prevent and control deforestation and burning, with transparency and participation, going beyond the commitments established in the Paris Agreement, in order to avoid an increase of more than 1.5 °C in average global temperatures.

14. We are aware that these challenges will only be met through greater articulation and collaboration among various sectors of Brazilian and international society. Therefore, the co-signing social movements, networks and civil society organizations call upon the various levels of government, Brazilian society and the international community to establish, with the urgency the situation requires, an agenda of articulated and effective actions - including those outlined above - to reverse the ongoing process of devastation of a biome that is essential for the livelihoods of its citizens and strategic for the integrity of the global climate system.

December 12th, 2019

Civil society organizations, networks and social movements that sign this declaration

1. APIB - Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil
2. COIAB - Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira
3. Coletivo de Mulheres do Xingu
4. Coletivo Proteja Amazônia
5. Comitê em Defesa da Vida Amazônica na bacia do Rio Madeira
6. CONAQ - Coordenação Nacional de Articulação das Comunidades Negras Rurais Quilombolas
7. Conselho Nacional das Populações Extrativistas - CNS
8. FAOR - Fórum da Amazônia Oriental
9. Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs e Movimentos Sociais para o Meio Ambiente e o Desenvolvimento
10. Fórum em Defesa de Altamira
11. Fórum Mudanças Climáticas e Justiça Socioambiental
12. Forum Popular da Natureza
13. Fórum Teles Pires
14. Frente Ampla Democrática Socioambiental (FADS)
15. Frente Parlamentar de Juventude-Pará
16. Frente por uma Nova Política Energética para o Brasil
17. GT Infraestrutura
18. Marcha Mundial por Justiça Climática / Marcha Mundial do Clima
19. MNCCD - Movimento Nacional Contra Corrupção e pela Democracia
20. MNCR - Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis
21. MoCAN-Peruíbe (Movimento Contra as Agressões à Natureza)
22. Movimento de Atingidos por Barragens - MAB
23. Movimento Feminista de Mulheres com Deficiência Inclusivas
24. Movimento Nacional de Direitos Humanos SC
25. Movimento Negro de Altamira
26. Movimento Tapajós Vivo de Santarém
27. Movimento Xingu Vivo para Sempre
28. Observatório do Clima
29. RCA - Rede de Cooperação Amazônica
30. Rede Brasileira de Educação Ambiental
31. Rede de Educação Ambiental do Rio de Janeiro – REARJ
32. Rede Juruena Vivo

33. Rede de Mulheres Ambientalistas da América Latina- Elo Brasileiro
34. Sindipetro Unificado de São Paulo

35. Ação de Mulheres pela Equidade - AME
36. AIDA
37. Amazon Watch
38. Amigos da Terra - Amazônia Brasileira
39. APN/VG - Associação de Preservação da Natureza - Vale do Gravataia
40. APREMAVI – Associação de Preservação do Meio Ambiente e da Vida
41. Articulação Antinuclear Brasileira
42. Ascema Nacional
43. Ascema São Paulo
44. ASIBAMA-DF
45. ASIBAMA/MG - Associação dos Servidores do IBAMA e do ICMBio em Minas Gerais
46. Associação Alternativa Terrazul
47. Associação das Famílias da Casa Familiar Rural de Belterra
48. Associação das Mulheres Munduruku Wakoborun
49. Associação dos Servidores do IBAMA e ICMBIO - ASIBAMA/RJ
50. Associação dos Servidores do Ministério do Meio Ambiente- ASSEMMA
51. Associação Pro Azul Ambiental
52. Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation
53. Centro de Apoio a Projetos de Ação Comunitária (CEAPAC)
54. Centro de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos de Petrópolis
55. Centro de Direitos Humanos Dom Máximo Biennes
56. ClimaInfo
57. Comissão Indigenista Missionário - CIMI Norte II
58. Comissão Justiça e Paz - Prelazia do Xingu
59. Comissão Justiça e Paz arquidiocese de Santarém
60. Comissão Pastoral da Terra - Anapú
61. Comitê de Energia Renovável do Semiárido - CERSA
62. Comitê INPA pela Democracia
63. Comissão Pastoral da Terra - CPT/Amazônia
64. Defensores do planeta
65. Ecoa - Ecologia e Ação
66. Fian Brasil
67. FONASC.CBH
68. Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs e Movimentos Sociais para o Meio Ambiente e o Desenvolvimento
69. Fundação Avina
70. Fundação Grupo Esquel Brasil
71. GEEMA- Grupo de Estudos em Educação e Meio Ambiente
72. Greenpeace Brasil
73. Grupo de Defesa da Amazônia
74. IBASE - Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas
75. ICV - Instituto Centro de Vida
76. IDESAN - Instituto de Conservação e Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Amazônia
77. IEPÊ - Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígenas
78. IMAZON - Instituto do Homem e Meio Ambiente da Amazônia
79. INESC - Instituto de Estudos Socio-Econômicos
80. Instituto Aldeias
81. Instituto BVRio
82. Instituto de Cidadania e Direitos Humanos - TEIA
83. Instituto de Educação para a Sustentabilidade - 5 Elementos
84. Instituto Democracia e Sustentabilidade
85. Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil - IEB
86. Instituto Madeira Vivo
87. Instituto de Pesquisas e Desenvolvimento Sócio Ambiental - IPEASA

88. Instituto Viva Chico Mendes
89. International Rivers – Brasil
90. IPAM – Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia
91. ISA - Instituto Socioambiental
92. ISPN - Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza
93. KOINONIA Presença Ecumênica e Serviço
94. Marcha Mundial por Justiça Climática/ Marcha Mundial do Clima
95. Mater Natura-Instituto de Estudos Ambientais
96. Missão Batista Schweizer Freude Der Brasilianischen
97. Centro de Direitos Humanos Dom Máximo Bienes
98. OBSERVARE- Observatório da Educação Ambiental
99. Observatório Nacional de Justiça Socioambiental Luciano Mendes de Almeida (OLMA)
100. Observatório Socioambiental
101. OekoBr
102. OPAN - Operação Amazônia Nativa
103. Organização Ponto Terra
104. Pastoral Indigenista - Prelazia do Xingu
105. Pastoral Indigenista da Prelazia do Xingu
106. PHS – Projetos Hospitais Sustentáveis
107. Projeto Saúde e Alegria
108. Rádio comunitária de Oriximiná
109. Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos – SDDH
110. SOS Amazônia
111. SPVS - Sociedade de Pesquisa em Vida Selvagem e Educação Ambiental
112. Subverta – Psol
113. Terra de Direitos
114. Uma Gotinha no Oceano
115. WWF Brasil

Members of Brazilian Parliament that endorse this declaration

- Congressman Nilto Tatto (PT/SP), Coordinator, Frente Parlamentar Ambientalista (Parliamentary Environmental Caucus)
- Congresswoman Joênia Wapichana (REDE/RR), Coordinator, Frente Parlamentar de Defesa dos Povos Indígenas (Parliamentary Caucus in Defense of Indigenous Peoples)
- Congressman Airton Faleiro (PT/PA)
- Congressman Alencar Santana Braga (PT-SP)
- Congresswoman Áurea Carolina (PSOL/MG)
- Congressman David Miranda (PSOL/RJ)
- Congressman Edmilson Rodrigues (PSOL/PA)
- Congressman Felipe Rigoni (PSB/ES)
- Congresswoman Fernanda Melchionna (PSOL/RS)
- Congressman Glauber Braga (PSOL)
- Congressman Ivan Valente (PSOL/SP)
- Congressman José Ricardo (PT/AM)
- Congresswoman Luíza Erundina (PSOL/SP)
- Congressman Marcelo Freixo (PSOL/RJ)
- Congressman Padre João (PT/MG)
- Congresswoman Sâmia Bonfim (PSOL/SP)
- Congresswoman Tabata Amaral (PDT/SP)
- Congresswoman Taliria Petrone (PSOL/RJ)

- Senator Alessandro Vieira (Cidadania/CE)
- Senator Fabiano Contarato (REDE/ES)

- Senator Eliziane Gama (Cidadania/MA)
- Senator Randolfe Rodrigues (REDE-AP)
- Marina Silva, ex-Senator and ex-Minister of the Environment (REDE)

References

- ¹ More information about the seminar is available here: <https://www.inesc.org.br/seminariodesmatamento/>
Recording the live broadcast by TV Câmara: <https://edemocracia.camara.leg.br/audiencias/sala/1401> Slideshows of speakers: <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-permanentes/cmads/seminarios-e-outros-eventos/eventos-2019/28-11-2019-desmatamento-e-queimadas-na-amazonia-tendencia-dinamica-e-solucao>
- ² <http://www.obt.inpe.br/OBT/assuntos/programa/amazonia/prodes>
- ³ <http://queimadas.dgi.inpe.br/queimadas/eq1km/>; It was also found that the drought period of 2019 was milder than the previous three years, not justifying the explosion in the number of hot spots. see: https://ipam.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/NT-Fogo-Amazônia-2019-1_2.pdf
- ⁴ Mariana Napolitano Ferreira - "Protected Areas and Deforestation" (CMADS Seminar 28/11/19). Source: The Eco 25/11/19; <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-permanentes/cmads/seminarios-e-outros-eventos/eventos-2019/28-11-2019-desmatamento-e-queimadas-na-amazonia-tendencia-dinamica-e-solucao/mesa-01>
- ⁵ "You won't end deforestation or burning, it's cultural," says Bolsonaro | Politics | G1 - <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2019/11/20/voce-nao-vai-acabar-com-desmatamento-nem-com-queimadas-e-cultural-diz-bolsonaro.ghtml>
- ⁶ Alessandra Cardoso - "Public Budget and the Increase of Burning and Deforestation in the Amazon" (CMADS Seminar 28/11/19). Source: Siga Brasil; <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-permanentes/cmads/seminarios-e-outros-eventos/eventos-2019/28-11-2019-desmatamento-e-queimadas-na-amazonia-tendencia-dinamica-e-solucao/mesa-02>
- ⁷ Minister Ricardo Salles - "I determine the opening of disciplinary administrative proceedings against all employees." (13/04/19). Source: Brasil de Fato;
- ⁸ "Bolsonaro says it will not demarcate indigenous lands," Andreia Verdélio, *Brazil Agency*, 16/08/2019, <http://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/politica/noticia/2019-08/bolsonaro-diz-que-nao-fara-demarcacao-de-terras-indigenas>;
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- ¹⁰ "Inpe director says Bolsonaro speech 'caused embarrassment' and will be dismissed" | Nature | G1 - <https://g1.globo.com/nature/noticia/2019/08/02/serei-exonerado-says-inpe-inir.ghtml>;
- ¹¹ Bolsonaro's speech in Riyadh and the dismantling of environmental policy", *Direto da Ciência*, 31/10/2019, <http://www.diretodaciencia.com/2019/10/31/o-discurso-de-bolsonaro-em-riad-e-o-desmonte-da-politica-ambiental/>

Further information: www.inesc.org.br/deforestation

Watch a short video produced for the launch of the declaration: https://youtu.be/Jp2_aV3YKEc

