# **Jair Bolsonaro left the government setting a record for Amazon deforestation**

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**Body**

With his presidency over, the traces of Jair Bolsonaro's passage through the leadership of Brazil's destinies continue to show their traces, not only in the economy and in the brutal increase of social exclusion, but also in the destruction of the environment.

According to an official report covering last December, the last month that the ultra-right-winger was in power, ***deforestation*** in the Brazilian ***Amazon*** increased 150% in December in relation to the same period of 2021.

Satellite monitoring detected 218.4 square kilometers of forest cover destroyed last month in Brazil's part of the world's largest rainforest, according to data from the DETER satellite monitoring system of the National Institute for Space Research (INPE).

The area, nearly four times the size of Manhattan, increased 150% over the 87.2 square kilometers deforested in December 2021, according to INPE.

Bolsonaro, who was replaced on January 1 by leftist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, provoked international protests during his four years in office over a wave of fires and logging in the ***Amazon***, a key resource in the international race to curb climate change.

Under Bolsonaro, an agribusiness ally and climate change denier, the average annual ***deforestation*** in the Brazilian ***Amazon*** increased 75.5% over the previous decade.

"Bolsonaro's government may be over, but his nefarious environmental legacy will be felt for a long time," Marcio Astrini, executive secretary of the Climate Observatory, a coalition of environmental groups, said in a statement.

Last December was the third worst recorded by the DETER program in its eight years of existence, after 2017 and 2015.

***Deforestation*** in 2022 was also near or at record levels during the dry season months (August, September and October), when logging and fires often increase due to drier weather.

Experts say the destruction is mainly due to farms and land grabbers who clear the forest for cattle and crops.

Lula, 77, who already governed the country between 2003 and 2010, promised to restart environmental protection programs, fight for zero ***deforestation*** and ensure that the Latin American giant is no longer a "pariah" on climate issues.

**The hard facts**

Under Bolsonaro's government, the ***Amazon*** has suffered the worst ***deforestation*** since 2006, but 2022 has been catastrophic.

The PlenaMata Forest Monitor, which does satellite monitoring and research by multiple organizations, notes that about 461,312,570 trees have been deforested, an average of 1,221 trees per minute, during 2022. With Bolsonaro's arrival in 2019, the figure almost doubled: from 4,953 square kilometers in 2018 to 9,177 in 2019.

"The rate of ***deforestation*** in indigenous territories is rising sharply, with an increase of 74% between 2018 and 2019," noted Global Witness, following the first year of the Bolsonaro government. Indigenous communities have been constantly threatened and attacked by state policies.

The Atlas of Environmental Justice, which documents social conflicts around environmental issues, points out that 174 cases of environmental conflicts have been reported in Brazil, in which around 150 are active. According to WWF, because of Jair Bolsonaro's policies, by 2021 Brazil would suffer the "worst water crisis in 90 years due to the combined effect of meteorological factors with the increasing ***deforestation*** of the ***Amazon***."

Impunity and lack of justice has also been denounced in multiple investigations. Amnesty International launched in 2021 a report entitled "1,000 days without rights. The violations of the Bolsonaro government", in which it denounces multiple aggressions to human rights. Among them, it denounces the omissions of Bolsonaro's government in the face of the fires of 2019 and 2020 that destroyed large areas of the ***Amazon***; his anti-indigenous speeches and agenda; and the constant attacks on journalists.

Human RightsWatch has also indicated that "Bolsonaro's government has weakened the enforcement of environmental laws and, in practice, given a green light to criminal networks that drive illegal ***deforestation*** of the ***Amazon*** and intimidate and attack forest defenders. The number of homicides by police officers reached a record high, disproportionately affecting black Brazilians."

**Persecution of environmentalists**

The news of the murder of indigenous rights defender Bruno Araujo Pereira and English journalist Dom Phillips in June last year went around the world. However, it is not the only case of murders of environmental leaders. Brazil is among the most dangerous countries for environmental defenders.

According to information from the Global Witness organization, which documents the murders of environmental leaders, 342 defenders have been killed in Brazil since 2012 (26 in 2021, 20 in 2020 and 24 in 2019).

The situation during 2022 was no better. This organization points out that "Since Bolsonaro came to power, he has encouraged illegal logging and mining, overturned the protection of indigenous territorial rights, attacked conservation groups, and dismantled and cut the budgets and resources of forest and indigenous protection agencies. This has led criminal gangs to invade indigenous and conservation areas with impunity."

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