

30 aug 22 - The Amazon and the Future of Brazil: a guide – An examination of the regions nine states between 2018 and 2022

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>>[Click here to read “The Amazon and the Future of Brazil: a guide – An examination of the region’s nine states between 2018 and 2022?<<](#) A comprehensive analysis featuring unpublished testimonials, deforestation data, violence indicators, and the role of the parliamentary caucuses and state governments in the explosion of forest destruction, revealing what is at stake in the upcoming 2022 elections **São Paulo and New York, August 2022 –** With a little over a month to the 2022 presidential elections in Brazil, the monitoring initiative Smoke Signal launches [?The Amazon and the Future of Brazil: a guide – An examination of the region’s nine states between 2018 and 2022?](#), an independent production started from a survey of the main events of the socioenvironmental agenda in the four years of Bolsonaro’s administration in all states that make up the region known as ?Legal Amazon? in Brazil. The material was written based on an **active listening** process carried out between May and July 2022 with the collection of **19 testimonials** from people working in the territories covered by the guide. **Communicators, researchers, indigenous and community leaders, and activists** were heard. The interviews directed the research and, combined with the best available data, resulted in a qualified and thorough report on the region that occupies almost 60% of the national territory. The Guide presents an **overview** of what the Brazilian Legal Amazon is, contextualizing the reader with geographic and socioenvironmental information and the main political and economic drivers of forest destruction and violence. It brings a selection of **data produced by** relevant **scientific institutes** and civil society organizations from the region, and a survey of emblematic cases, **violent deaths and indicators of the growing threats faced by native peoples in these areas**. The publication also details the movements of the **National Congress** in this scenario of dispute over land and environmental resources, highlighting four **bills** in progress in the federal houses and the **behavior of state governments** and their parliamentary caucuses regarding the so-called **Destruction Package**, a series of legislative proposals that profoundly change the use and management of land in the country. Moreover, the **guide** organizes **timelines** with the main events monitored by **Smoke Signal** over the past four years, mapping the **main fake news** and disinformation campaigns related to weakening environmental protections promoted in each of the states. Finally, it highlights **critical areas** and **high-impact projects for the populations and biodiversity** that will likely continue to be the subject of political bargaining after the elections. “We produced the Guide as yet another tool to inform journalistic coverage and place the public debate about the Amazon as a central issue for Brazil before, during and after the October elections. It is also relevant to the international community due to the financing role of commodities markets and diplomatic influence in a region that is key to global climate stability,” explains Rebeca Lerer, author and coordinator of Smoke Signal. “We prioritized narratives from people who live and work in each Brazilian Amazon state because listening to them it’s the only way forward to fight systemic environmental racism and the climate emergency ? two unavoidable challenges for Brazil’s democracy and the future of the forest”, she says. >>[Click here to read “The Amazon and the Future of Brazil: a guide – An examination of the region’s nine states between 2018 and 2022?<<](#) **What you will find in it:** The Amazon and forest peoples and defenders have suffered a relentless streak of attacks during Jair Bolsonaro?s administration. The dismantling of socioenvironmental governance in the country has been carried out through infralegal reforms, the militarization of civilian oversight institutions such as the FUNAI, the national agency for Indigenous affairs, and IBAMA, Brazil?s main environmental control agency, as well as the transferring of responsibility for controlling deforestation to the Armed Forces through the issuance of successive decrees of ?Guarantee of Law and Order?. To distract and cover up the damages, a sophisticated smokescreen of disinformation was created. Like a tsunami of *fake news* sponsored by the federal government itself, by local governments and by the agribusiness and mining sectors, the strategy was used to criminalize social movements and mask decisions that compromise more than three decades of public policies, advances in legislation on land use and socioenvironmental governance in the country. **Legal Amazon** The Brazilian Amazon region is organized into two main geographic territories: the Amazon biome and the Legal Amazon, which includes the entire biome area, as well as part of the Cerrado savanna and Pantanal wetlands biomes. The states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima, Tocantins and part of the state of Maranhão are part

of the Legal Amazon. This area **occupies 58.9% of the Brazilian territory**. Almost 16% of the region was affected by deforestation by the year 2020. Between 2020 and 2021, there was an increase in deforestation of 21.97% and, in June 2022, the area suffered the **greatest destruction ever seen in the last 15 years**, with a deforestation equivalent to two thousand soccer fields in only 151 days. The Legal Amazon also presents serious security and violence problems in rural areas with **10 of the 30 most violent cities in the country**, according to the Brazilian Public Security Forum (FBSP). **The dismantling of socioenvironmental governance** In the last four years, the explosion of deforestation rates and the historic forest fires, as well as the political incentive for land grabbing, mining and other criminal activities in the forest, have had lethal consequences for indigenous peoples, environmentalists, activists and defenders of the struggle for land. **These facts are not isolated cases and are part of a government project**. The measures that make up the so-called **destruction package** have gained strength with Arthur Lira and Rodrigo Pacheco, both allies of President Jair Bolsonaro, in the presidency of the House of Representatives and the Senate, respectively. Given the political relevance of the Amazon Caucus in the federal legislature and in their electoral domiciles, the Guide lists, state by state, how the federal congressman and congresswoman elected for the 2018-2022 Legislature, as well as the senators, voted on four key bills in Bolsonaro's **Destruction Package**: **Bill (PL) 2633/2020**; **dubbed the Land Grabbing bill** threatens 19.6 million hectares of federal areas. - **Bill (PL) 3729/2004**; **Environmental Licensing bill**: exempts many activities from environmental licensing, creating legal insecurity and impacting communities that won't participate in the process. **Bill (PL) 490/2007**; **on Demarcation of Indigenous Lands (TIs)**: a gapping threat to indigenous rights through the incorporation of the Temporal Landmark thesis and opening the territories for predatory extractivism. **Bill (PL) 191/2020**; **Mining on Indigenous Lands**: fails to comply with international standards and commitments to which Brazil is a signatory. **Secret budget** In 2021, a scheme was denounced: the executive fueled the parliament through a legislative loophole for the distribution of public funds with no accountability. In return, the congressman and senators would support projects of interest to the government. The money comes from Rapporteur's Amendments, a category which although provided for in the General Budget of the Union, presents no record of the exact amount allocated to each amendment and, often, hides the names of parliamentarians who indicated the allocation of the funds; hence the scheme being dubbed Secret Budget. Last year, **PLN 19/2021/PLOA 2022 (Union Budget Law)** set aside R\$ 16.2 billion for the rapporteur's amendments. Without clarity on the criteria for division of this money and according to information reported by the press, during Bolsonaro's administration, members of the government's allied base in the House of Representatives have been heavily favored. **Deforestation vectors** The main practices that contribute to the deforestation of forest areas and native vegetation in the Legal Amazon can be classified into four major vectors: 1) illegal occupation, or land grabbing, which consists of invasion, theft and possession of public lands for profit through illegal use or sale of the land (it is estimated that today there is an area of 16 million hectares resulting from this criminal activity in the region); 2) illegal extraction of native timber or unauthorized logging; 3) expansion of the agricultural and cattle ranching frontier; and 4) the expansion of mining and illegal gold digging sites. Today, the Legal Amazon region concentrates 93.7% of the country's gold mining sites. **Highlights by state in the Legal Amazon: ACRE (AC)** On the political scene, of the eight federal representatives of the state, 52.3% voted in favor of the four Destruction Package bills analyzed in the Guide; 62.5% of the representatives and two of the three senators are part of the ruralist caucus in Congress. An attention point in the state is bill (PL) 6024/2019, authored by federal representatives Mara Rocha (PSDB/AC), which proposes the reduction of the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve; delivering it to land speculation; and the extinction of the Serra do Divisor National Park, transforming it into an Environmental Protection Area, with more flexible rules. The change in the conservation unit aims to allow the construction of the Pacific Highway to connect Cruzeiro do Sul (AC) to Pucallpa (Peru). The highway project directly threatens the indigenous communities of the Nukini and Nawa Indigenous Lands, who live around the Serra do Divisor National Park. Meanwhile, the Ashaninka people and 30 communities that also inhabit the border area are threatened by the illegal reopening of another highway, the Nueva Italia; Puerto Breu (UC-105) road in Peru. In addition to the border crisis, since 2018 deforestation in the state has been on the rise. Land grabbing and deforestation are advancing in an area coveted by agribusiness known as AMACRO, located between southern Amazonas, eastern Acre and northwestern Rondônia. **AMAPÁ (AP)** The state has eight elected federal representatives. In votes comprising the Destruction Package bills, 62.5% of the votes of these representatives were in favor and 25% of the parliamentarians

are members of the Ruralist Caucus. Of the three senators, two are part of this caucus. The Guide highlights as the main indigenous emergency the areas of Oiapoque and Tumucumaque where there are records of contamination of the rivers and fish by mercury used in illegal gold mining, a threat that causes food insecurity and impacts on the health of the indigenous communities in the region. The Smoke Signal monitoring listed three important events for the state in the analyzed period: the assassination of indigenous leader Emyra Waiãpi by illegal gold diggers in July 2019, a fact that was publicly questioned by President Jair Bolsonaro; the advance of gold diggers in indigenous lands during the pandemic and the month long energy blackout that directly affected more vulnerable communities such as the *quilombolas* in November 2020. **AMAZONAS (AM)** In the state of Amazonas, the political scenario proved to be even more inclined to the Destruction Package proposed by the Bolsonaro government, with 83.3% of the votes of the eight representatives in the House favorable to the bills and 50% of them integrating the ruralist caucus. In the Senate, the three state representatives belong to the FPA. The Guide points out as one of the main examples of the federal effort for the passage of the cattle herd in the state, the paving work of the Middle section of the BR-319 highway, qualified by the Ministry of Economy of the Bolsonaro government to go ahead, but which faces problems in environmental licensing and is contested in the courts. The completion of the highway threatens 63 indigenous lands where 18 peoples live, including isolated groups. The prospect of paving BR-319 is linked to the sharp increase in deforestation and land grabbing in the south of the state, which has been breaking successive records, and the interest of agribusiness in the region known as AMACRO. In the Madeira River axis, in recent years there has also been a register of the expansion of illegal gold mining in the municipalities of Borba, Nova Olinda do Norte, Novo Aripuanã, and Autazes. As an indigenous emergency, the Guide points to the Vale do Javari IT region. The assassinations of Bruno, Dom and Maxciel showed the world the reality of the 26 indigenous peoples who live in the Valley, a region that is under great pressure from natural resource exploiters and that has suffered increasing attacks since the election of Jair Bolsonaro.

MARANHÃO (MA) In the political scenario, the state of Maranhão has 18 federal representatives and three senators, and 72.25% of the Maranhão representatives' votes in the House were in favor of the Destruction Package's bills; and 50% of them are part of the Ruralist Caucus. Of the senators, two are part of the caucus. The dismantling in the state is exemplified by the processing of the complementary bill 246/2020, which institutes the Matopiba Geo-economic and Social Complex which could amplify the savannah devastation. The region called Matopiba, composed of parts of Maranhão, Tocantins, Piauí and Bahia, concentrated over 61% of all deforestation in the Cerrado biome between 2020 and 2021. Maranhão is the state with the largest deforested area (2,281 km²) in all of Matopiba. The expansion of the aerospace base of the Alcântara Launching Center (CLA) is pointed out by the Guide as a *quilombola* emergency. In partnership with the USA, the work may imply the forced removal of 30 *quilombos*, affecting about two thousand afro-brazilian people in the region. In the monitoring carried out by Smoke Signal, the murders of Paulino Guajajara, from the Guajajara indigenous people, in November 2019, and Laércio Guajajara in December of the same year, stand out. Reports indicate that they suffered death threats from illegal loggers in the region. In January 2020 Firmino Silvino Guajajara and Raimundo Bernice Guajajara, both members of the same ethnic group as Paulino, were killed in a shooting in the municipality of Jenipapo dos Vieiras. **MATO GROSSO (MT)** In the state of Mato Grosso, the eight parliamentarians who represent it in the House of Representatives voted favorably for the Destruction Package bills in 76% of the votes. Of the total, 87.5% aligned themselves with the interests of the Ruralista Caucus in Congress, and two of the three senators in the House are part of the caucus. Bill 337/2022, which is currently being processed, formally excludes Mato Grosso from the Legal Amazon area. With this, the state can alter the application of the Forest Code and expand the area to be legally deforested on each property. The state is the largest producer and exporter of soybean in the country, with more than 10 million hectares of cultivated area, and owner of the largest cattle herd of the Legal Amazon, with 32 million heads of cattle. Mato Grosso is also the national leader in the native timber production. Another point of attention is the accumulated deforestation of 139,504 km² in the state, equivalent to 58% of the total for the Cerrado and Pantanal biomes in 2020. The deforestation rates are reflected in the indigenous emergency. The Batelão and Enawenê-Nawê Indigenous Lands appear on the list among the 10 indigenous lands most threatened by deforestation in the country in the first quarter of 2022. The Piripkura Indigenous Lands suffer with sequential delays in the demarcation process and the increasing advance of land grabbing and criminal fires. **PARÁ (PA)** The state has 17 federal representatives and three senators, with 47.5% of the representatives and two senators being part of the ruralist caucus. The 17 representatives from Pará voted in favor of

the bills of the Bolsonaro's Destruction Package on 54% of the occasions. Pará is the most deforested state in the Legal Amazon, leader of the ranking for 16 years. Even so, its per capita GDP is only R\$ 19,000 per inhabitant, a little more than half the national GDP (R\$ 33,6 thousand). The state also accumulates the status of the country's largest mining producer, being responsible for over 94% of the region's ore exports, with iron ore accounting for US\$ 14.34 billion and gold, US\$ 424 million. The Guide highlights Pará's legislative decree 508/2019 supported by a large group of senators, which proposes a plebiscite for the creation of the state of Tapajós. The new state would divide Pará, its residents and its natural resources. Our publication also raises concerns about the Environmental Commitment Term between [Norte Energia](#) and IBAMA/ Hydropower station [UHE Belo Monte](#), an agreement signed between the parties to increase the level of the plant's reservoir by restricting the volume of water in the Xingu River, a measure that would make subsistence fishing impossible for indigenous and urban communities and also threaten 80% of the plants and fish in the region. As attention points, the publication chooses the BR-163 highway, stage of the Day of Fire in 2019, and where deforestation in the surrounding area increased 359% in 2020. The Sinop (MT) & Miritituba (PA) stretch was auctioned by the federal government in 2021, without consulting the peoples directly impacted by the work, such as the Kayapó and the Panará. The advance of forest destruction in the Xingu region is also critical. The most important indigenous emergencies are in the Munduruku communities, where six out of every ten people present levels of contamination by mercury above safe limits. Mining in the region grew more than 269% in the Munduruku territory according to a survey conducted between January 2019 and May 2021. In the Ituna-Itatá indigenous land, 84.5% of the deforestation registered occurred between the years 2019 and 2021 alone. The location of the indigenous land also raises concern because it is situated at the entrance to a complex of 24 million hectares of forests protected by the Mosaic of the Middle Land [Mosaico da Terra do Meio] between the Xingu and the Tapajós rivers. Here, Smoke Signal's monitoring highlights two relevant events for the territory: the shooting carried out by miners against an IBAMA team during an inspection action in August 2019, in the Ituna/ Itatá Indigenous Land; and in April 2022, the denounce of a scheme of businessmen linked to illegal gold digging that donated more than R\$ 400,000 to candidates for city councils and mayorships in the Tapajós region, southwest Pará, in the 2020 municipal elections.

RONDÔNIA (RO) In Rondônia, the eight representatives from the state in the House voted for the Destruction Package on 41% of the occasions, with half of the congressmen being members of the Ruralist Caucus accompanying two out of the three senators. The guide raises concerns about the Complementary Law 1089/2021, approved in April 2021 by the State Congress, which reduces by almost 220 thousand hectares the Extractive Reserve (Resex) Jaci-Paraná and the Guajará-Mirim State Park, regularizing illegal land grabbing and deforestation for cattle raising. Also of note is Law 5299/2022, which prohibits the destruction of machinery, vehicles and other items seized in actions against illegal gold digging and environmental crimes in the state. The main attention point is the advance of land grabbing and deforestation between the south of Amazonas, the east of Acre and the northwest of Rondônia, in the AMACRO region, an area coveted by the agribusiness. And the indigenous emergency in the region is the tension experienced by the peoples of the Uru Eu Wau Wau territory who are under growing pressure from loggers and land-grabbers, a threat that worsened after the assassination of the forest guardian Ari Eu Wau Wau in an ambush in 2020. Our timeline highlights two important events in the state of Rondônia during the period. The death threats and blockades of actions by ICMBio agents in December 2018, with reports of the aggressors and land invaders emboldened by Bolsonaro's election; and the murder of Ilma Rodrigues dos Santos and her husband, Edson Lima Rodrigues, members of the League of Poor Peasants (LCP) and residents of the Thiago dos Santos Camp in the District of Abunã, in February 2022.

RORAIMA (RR) The state has eight representatives of the House, who voted in favor of the Destruction Package in 74.8% of the votes on the issue. The Guide highlights the approval of Law 1.701/2022, under challenge in the courts. The law prohibits enforcement agencies and the Military Police from destroying private property seized in operations to fight environmental crime. The state government of Roraima still tried, unsuccessfully, to implement State Law 1.453/2021 sanctioned by Governor Antonio Denarium in February 2021, which provided for the removal of the need for licensing for mining activities of all types of ore in the state. The law was annulled by the Supreme Court for its unconstitutional character and potential threat to the environment. With regard to the indigenous emergency, the Guide highlights the situation of the Yanomami territory which has been severely impacted by illegal gold mining, deforestation and the destruction of the rivers. The invasion of miners in the area has led to an explosion in the cases of malaria and other diseases and a frightening resurgence of violence against the indigenous people who inhabit the Indigenous Territory.

The increase in conflicts against the Yanomami can be exemplified with some emblematic cases. Among them we highlight: the assassination of two young Yanomami in the region of the Parima River, in July 2020; an attack against people from the Helepe community that resulted in the serious injury of an indigenous person and the death of a miner in February 2021; more recently, in April of this year, the case of a 12 year old girl who was raped to death, and a child who was thrown into the river during an attack registered by miners against the Aracaçá community, in the Waikás region. Violence has been intensifying in the region with the backing of the State. **TOCANTINS (TO)** Finally, the state of Tocantins has eight federal representatives in the House of Representatives, with 78.5% of votes in favor of the Destruction Package's bills. Over half of these congressmen, 62.5%, are part of the Ruralist Caucus, including the three senators. As a highlight of the dismantling, the Guide points out the complementary bill 246/2020, which institutes the MATOPIBA Geo-economic and Social Complex. The project should massify the agribusiness attacks against the territory. And as an indigenous emergency, the Bananal Island area appears as one of the most destroyed among the Cerrado conservation units subject to major fires in 2020. The territory is home to the Utaria Wyhyna/Iròdu Iràna, Inawebohona Indigenous communities. [To access the full guide, click here.](#)