

27 mar 23 - Pure Dynamite: how Bolsonaro's Government (2019-2022) Mineral Policy Set Up a Climate and Anti-Indigenous Bomb

<https://www.sinaldefumaca.com/en/especiais/pure-dynamite/>

*The report presents, in chronological order, actions from the past four years that imploded the National Mining Agency and other regulatory frameworks; Abrupt changes in mining legislation, dismantling of control institutions, incentives to illegal mining, handing over the national heritage to large transnational companies, and racist practices against indigenous and traditional peoples were the trademark of the Bolsonaro administration; The combination between the disdain for territorial and human rights and a sophisticated corporate lobbying strategy has led to the loss of control over the mining sector and caused a humanitarian crisis in indigenous lands; Commitments to the climate agenda assumed by Lula's government cannot be met without reviewing the mining policy, points out the report; Working groups during the transition to the new government recognized the horror found in the national mining sector; The publication brings twenty initial suggestions for the recovery of public governance and the reduction of the impacts of mining-related policies. Official launch on March 27th marks the joint effort between the institutions; **São Paulo and Brasília, March, 2023** ? On **March 27th, Observatório da Mineração [Mining Observatory]** and the socio-environmental monitoring organization Smoke Signal [Sinal de Fumaça] will launch the report [Pure Dynamite: how Bolsonaro's Government \(2019-2022\) Mineral Policy Set Up a Climate and Anti-Indigenous Bomb](#). The report provides a timeline of the metals and mining sector and details the dismantling of regulatory bodies, rights violations, scandalous agreements and other measures adopted by the former government to satisfy the national and international mining market lobby. The publication results from the work of the two institutions that monitor the mining agenda and the Brazilian socio-environmental crisis. Over the past four years, media coverage has presented the faces of an authoritarian and ineffective government. Our analysis, however, shows that the Bolsonaro administration was very efficient in facilitating access to land and mineral resources. The cattle herd strategy was also passed into the mining sector, linked to the weakening of socio-environmental licensing and the lack of control over land use, causing the ongoing humanitarian tragedy in indigenous territories, states Rebeca Lerer, coordinator of Smoke Signal. In its thorough and investigative work, **Observatório da Mineração** closely followed the work that Bolsonaro's government undertook at the national and international levels to dismantle public policies and sell mining and metal goods. Investigations have shown that his administration promoted legal and infralegal changes that benefited large mining companies, caused the criminal networks of illegal mining to soar, and made institutions such as the Ministry of Mines and Energy and the National Mining Agency totally subservient to vested financial interests. **Maurício Angelo, director of Observatório da Mineração and researcher at the Center for Sustainable Development at the University of Brasília**, points the abrupt changes in legislation, the strong incidence of lobbying by mining companies and garimpo [illegal mining] business groups, and the increase in invasions into indigenous territories under the government's blind eye are some of the highlights from the report. Based on the coverage made by the Observatório, **Pure Dynamite** helps to explain how the country reached very serious levels of corporate influence, environmental degradation and violations of rights, pointing out that this climate and anti-environmental bomb cannot be blamed on Jair Bolsonaro alone. The former president emboldened and scaled up measures initiated during **Michel Temer's** term (2016-2018) with the goal of increasing the mineral sector's share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from current 3% to up to 10%; this same objective was stated by Bolsonaro and House of Representatives president, Arthur Lira, in tandem with congresspeople and federal agencies. The first echelon of the Bolsonaro government has rolled out a red carpet for the mining lobby in Brasília since the beginning of its administration. The consequences for the populations directly and indirectly affected and for the environment have been tragic, points out Maurício Angelo. Not even the Vale crime in Brumadinho dam collapse in January 2019, which caused the death of 270 workers and victims, was enough to curb what was already in motion, resulting in impunity for those responsible and in the opening of the country to lobbying and bartering. From 2018 to 2022, Bolsonaro has also forged closer alliances with illegal mining groups and garimpos [illegal mining sites and endeavors] in an unprecedented movement in Brazilian politics, engaging governors and congressmen and accepting support financial even from mining entrepreneurs. **Smoke Signal** Socio-Environmental Monitor, which has recorded facts and movements related to Brazilian socio-environmental policies over the last four years, joined*

Observatório da Mineração to produce this unprecedented report. In addition to exposing the sophisticated articulations made between the **mining market lobby**, transnational companies and the federal government behind closed doors in the National Congress, the publication also brings a brief summary of the first measures adopted by Lula's government and a list with **20 initial suggestions for the recovery of public governance** and the reduction of negative effects of mining in the country. [Click here to read our report.](#) **Timeline: Highlights 2019** The year 2019 was the kickoff for the government's main moves in the mining sector; The year, however, started with the tragedy in Brumadinho (MG) without concrete accountability for those involved in the crime. That didn't stop government officials from inviting multinationals to explore and carry out mining activities in indigenous lands and border zones in the largest and most important corporate mining event in the world, the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC); They also announced the goal of expanding uranium mining in the country, disregarding the Federal Constitution and established the Joint Parliamentary Front for Mining (FPM) in Congress; We also highlight: the working group launched by the government to speed up the processing and release of licenses and concessions for mining companies and the creation of a task force to formalize illicit *garimpo* groups in the state of Pará. **2020** The main political event of 2020 was the submission of bill (PL) **191/2020**, a campaign promise of Bolsonaro, to liberate mining and agricultural exploration on indigenous lands, ignoring the Federal Constitution and disrespecting the territorial rights of indigenous peoples. Labeled the "Death Bill" by indigenous groups, the bill remains stalled in Congress. Another highlight was the so-called **regulatory guillotine** proposal, a mechanism created by the National Mining Agency under the advice of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to cut, unblock and advance regulations that benefit the mining sector and large mining companies. Meetings with *garimpo* and congresspeople lobbying for the activity in the Amazon, the ordinance signed by the government defining mining as an essential activity amid the Covid 19 pandemic, and the launch of the Mining and Development Program are also on our report. **2021** The period was marked by the strong *lobby* of *garimpo* entrepreneurs, who had never been so close to federal authorities, even participating in the agenda of former Vice President Hamilton Mourão. With the adoption of a policy for strategic minerals, the Bolsonaro government received dozens of projects from companies such as Vale, Sul Americana de Metais, Potássio do Brasil, Belo Sun and others, without the involvement or evaluation of any environmental council or the Ministry of the Environment itself. The year also saw the approval of bill (PL) 3729 by the House of Representatives, which weakened the environmental licensing policy, paving the way for other disasters such as the Brumadinho dam collapse. **2022** The political articulation to continue supporting large companies and the exploitation of national heritage, especially in indigenous territory, kept its steam in Congress in 2022, even with a split in the group of federal representatives who promised to deliver the text of the New Mining Code, commissioned by House speaker Arthur Lira and former president Bolsonaro. Right at the beginning of the year, the report highlights the approval of governmental subsidies worth BRL 3.3 billion for coal-fired thermoelectric plants; the approval of two decrees favoring *garimpo*; the use of the war in Ukraine as a political pawn for the approval of bill (PL) 191/2020; Bolsonaro's agenda with Elon Musk in an alleged deal to have Musk monitor the Amazon, but seen under the light of the billionaire's interest in the massive exploration of minerals critical to the electric vehicle sector; and Bolsonaro's opening of the lithium market in the country, interfering with the geopolitics of Latin America and directly favoring large multinationals such as Elon Musk's Tesla. The results of government practices became explicit in the 632% increase in illegal mining on indigenous lands between 2010 and 2021, according to Mapbiomas. One of the various scandals disclosed in the pre-2022 election period was the financial support given to Bolsonaro's by mining company owners indicted for murder as a result of the collapse of a tailings dam in Itabirito (MG) in 2014. The owners of Herculano Mineração jointly donated BRL 750 thousand to Jair Bolsonaro's reelection campaign. **Transition** After the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, transition work groups (WGs) were formed, with experts from various sectors to assess the situation left by the previous government. In the environmental area, the conclusions of WGs of Mines and Energy, Environment, and Indigenous Peoples are in line with the **Pure Dynamite report**, listing the enactment of measures, through decrees and ordinances, to encourage predatory activities such as the Mining Code and the Pro-Strategic Minerals Policy. The dismantling of regulatory frameworks and the abandonment of indigenous communities to their own fate has resulted in land invasion and humanitarian calamity in the Yanomami Indigenous Land and other illegal mining hotspots in the Amazon. **At the beginning of Lula's government, the Brazilian state finally reacted to the Yanomami genocide.** Lack of

health care, malaria and severe malnutrition are some of the effects of the many crimes committed in the Yanomami indigenous territory which were seen by the Lula government delegation on their field visit in January 2023. The deaths of more than 570 Yanomami children in the last four years and the humanitarian tragedy experienced in the region are consequences of illegal gold mining and associated deforestation, which grew 309% between October 2018 and December 2022 in the region, according to data from the Hutukara Yanomami Association. It is in this context that the Lula government faces the arduous mission of disarticulating criminal alliances and rebuilding governance in the mining sector, to honor the promises, goals, and agreements made with Brazilian society and the international community, including as zero deforestation and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the national energy matrix.

Suggestions for retaking control and reducing damage As a contribution to the new government and because this agenda is central to Brazilian socioeconomic and environmental development, **Pure Dynamite** lists twentyinitial suggestions and measures for the resumption of public governance over mining in Brazil. The recommendations cover the **strengthening of control agencies**, such as rebuilding the technical staff of the National Mining Agency and Ibama, for example; the **definitive shelving and revocation of bills, decrees, and measures** such as bill (PL) 191/2020, which authorizes mining on indigenous lands, and others that facilitate illegal mining; and **increasing transparency and social participation** denied under the previous government, with the inclusion of socio-environmental movements in the debates and development of policies in the area of mining and energy. Read the full document here. **About Observatório da Mineração** The [Mining Observatory](#) is a platform for investigative journalism, critical analysis, research and mentoring focused on the extractive sector created in 2015 by journalist Maurício Angelo. It specializes in covering activities of multinational companies, the socio-environmental impacts of mining and *garimpo*, lobbying, political influence, and the role of mining in the climate crisis and energy transition. It's become a global reference on mining matters. Follow on [Twitter](#), [Youtube](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#). **About Sinal de Fumaça** Launched in October 2020, [Smoke Signal](#) is an independent bilingual platform updated weekly that organizes a timeline of the main facts, news and speeches related to the Brazilian socio-environmental crisis. Produced by a group of communicators and activists with support from the Lema agency, the platform allows the search and customization of thematic timelines, by period or key stakeholder. The site also allows researchers, journalists, activists, students, and other users to download and archive selected content. In addition to serving as a monitor, Sinal de Fumaça operates as a space for preserving memory and combating misinformation on the Brazilian socio-environmental agenda. Follow on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). **Agência Lema** Leandro Matulja/ Leticia Zioni/ Guilherme Maia **Information to the Press:** Carolina Bressane (11) 9 9234 4570 carolina@agencialema.com.br Priscila Rosa de Oliveira- (11) 9 6959 2749 priscila@agencialema.com.br Gabriel Hsu (11) 96350 2213 gabriel.hsu@agencialema.com.br