

Deforestation in Brazilian Amazon reached record levels in January

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Brasilia, February 14 (RHC)-- In Brazil, deforestation in the Amazon rainforest last month rose to the highest level ever recorded for the month of January. New government data show Brazil's Amazon lost 166 square miles of rainforest — an area seven times the size of Manhattan.

Environmentalists say the deforestation is accelerating as far-right President Jair Bolsonaro faces an uphill battle for reelection in October.

One environmental activist, Britaldo Silveira Soares-Filho, told reporters: "Under the current government, the dismantling of Brazil's environmental protection, environmental laws and environmental enforcement as command and control is being promoted. So this is a race. There is a race to deforest especially the Amazon."

Earlier, the vice president of Brazil, Hamilton Mourao, acknowledged that the deforestation alert figures issued by the Institute for Space Research (Inpe), which indicated a record deforestation alert in the Amazon for the month of January, are true.

The Brazilian official justified the figures of the Real-Time Deforestation Detection System (Deter), which, even without complete data from last month, deforestation alerts identified an area of 360 km², the highest figure recorded for January since the beginning of the historical series in 2015.

Mourão, who chairs the National Council of the Legal Amazon in the federal government, acknowledged that January's deforestation was what he called "bad" and said he was evaluating the reasons for the increase in alerts.

Right-wing President Bolsonaro has been accused since 2019 by environmental activists, due to the growth of deforestation in the Amazon. The government during the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP26, announced that it had a goal of zero illegal deforestation by 2028.

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