

Report says deforestation in Brazil grew 91% prior to Amazon fires



Brasilia, September 10 (RHC)-- A recent study by Brazil's space agency (INPE) outlines the scale of deforestation in the run-up to the current Amazon fires raging across the region. From January to July, the rate of deforestation in the Amazon increased by 91 percent compared with the same period in 2018.

Figures published by the INPE show that in the first six months of 2019, 6,404.4 square kilometers of the Amazon was destroyed, a huge increase on the 3,336.7 square kilometers cut down in the first half of 2018.

The past few months have seen an even sharper increase. In May, the Amazon lost 738.2 km², then in June it lost 936.3 km², July the rate increased to 2,255.4 km² and finally in August, 1,700.8 km² were destroyed.

The country's space agency has used satellite images to detect the rate of deforestation. When similar figures were published recently by the same agency, far-right President Jair Bolsonaro fired the director after he showed an increase in deforestation under the Bolsonaro administration.

The figures stand in stark contrast to a recent report on the situation in Cuba. In the past year alone, Cuba has increased its forested area by 22,000 hectares, bringing the percentage of the country's surface area covered by forest up to nearly a third. The rate of forestation has accelerated during the county's socialist period, in 1959, prior to the revolution, just 13 percent of the country was covered by trees, that figure is now at 31 percent.

While Cuba has a state policy of reforesting areas cut down for farming and mining operations, Bolsonaro has actively backed agro-capitalists and those looking to clear large areas of the Brazilian ainfoest for commercial farming.

Despite the controversy over the Amazon fires raging in Brazil, Bolsonaro has again threatened to seize more Indigenous lands. "It is too much land for so few Indians, and without lobbying. What are the interests behind this?"

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