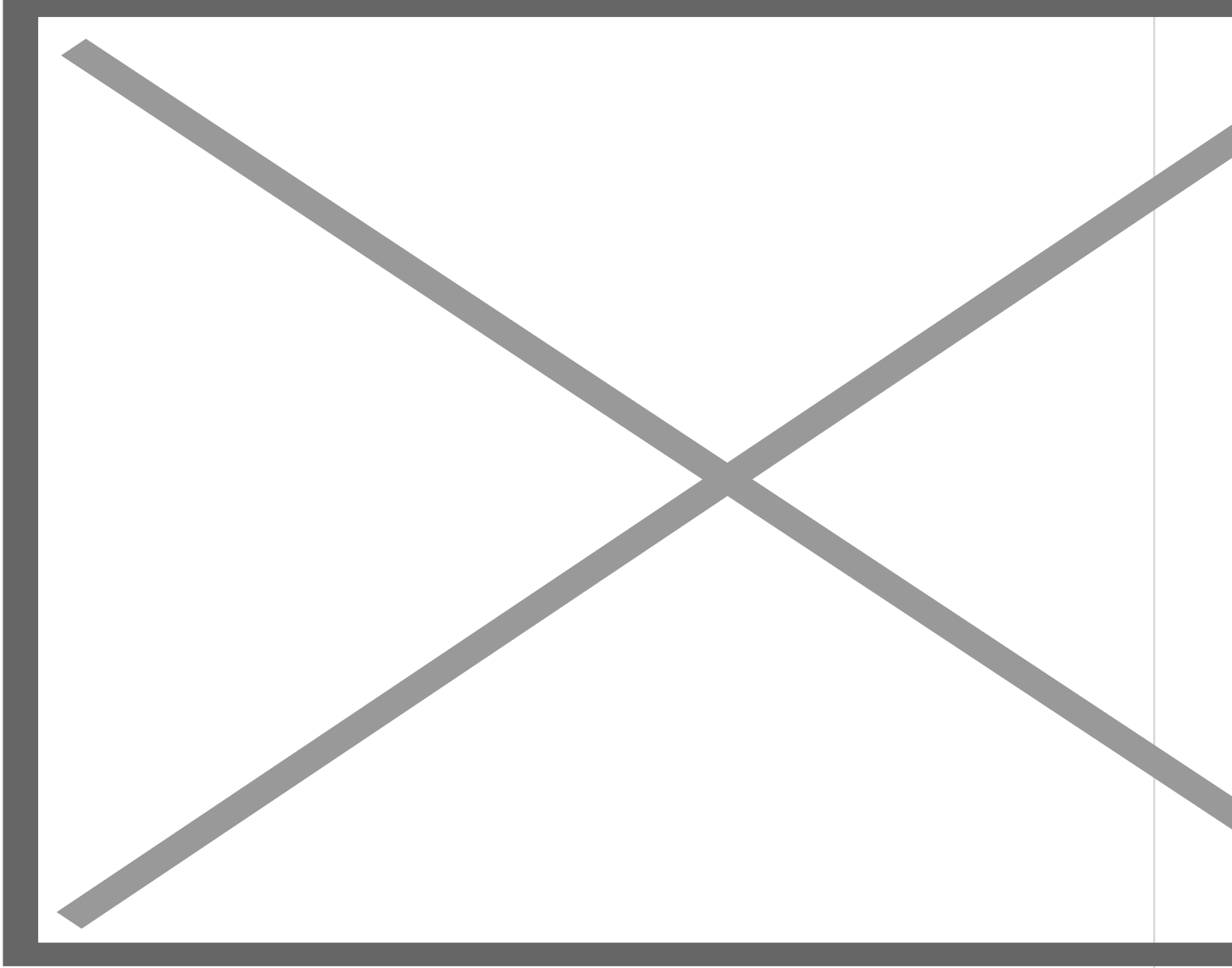


Brazilian president accused of crimes against humanity for destruction of Amazon

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Climate activists have filed a complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, accusing him of "crimes against humanity" for his role in the destruction of the Amazon.

The Hague, October 12 (RHC)-- Climate activists have filed a complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, accusing him of "crimes against humanity" for his role in the destruction of the Amazon.

In an official complaint filed at The Hague-based court on Tuesday, activists with the Austrian environmental advocacy group AllRise called for an investigation into Bolsonaro and his administration for actions "directly connected to the negative impacts of climate change around the world."

The plaintiffs accused Bolsonaro of waging a widespread campaign resulting in the killing of environmental defenders and of endangering the global population through emissions caused by deforestation.

They said Bolsonaro's administration had sought to "systematically remove, neuter, and eviscerate laws, agencies and individuals that serve to protect the Amazon." The team of experts estimated that emissions attributable to the Bolsonaro administration because of rampant deforestation would cause more than 180,000 excess heat-related deaths globally by 2100.

"In the last few years, climate science has come a long way in being able to provide evidence of specific causal relationships between emissions of greenhouse gases and the consequences that arrive globally as a result," Rupert Stuart Smith, from the University of Oxford's Sustainable Law Programme, told AFP.

According to the petition, Bolsonaro was responsible for nearly 4,000 square kilometers (400,000 hectares) of lost rainforest each year and had presided over monthly deforestation rates that had accelerated by up to 88 percent since taking office in January 2019.

Environmental activists say the key to saving the Amazon Forest is protecting the native inhabitants of the territory and their rights to their ancestral land. AllRise founder Johannes Wesemann said the petition aimed "not to speak on behalf of any Brazilian, but rather to show the global gravity of mass deforestation."

"What's happening in Brazil — mass deforestation — we want to understand the causal link to the global climate," Wesemann told AFP. "It is exactly what the Rome Statute defines as a crime against humanity: the intentional destruction of the environment and environmental defenders."

It is not the first time the ICC has been asked to launch an investigation of the Brazilian leader. Since 2016, there have been at least three other complaints by indigenous groups against Bolsonaro at the ICC, but it is the first case seeking to explicitly link deforestation to loss of life.

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