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Brazil's new president and “ruralists” threaten Amazonia’s environment, traditional peoples and the global climate

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The latest paper in our Environmental Conservation Perspectives Collection is *Brazil's new president and 'ruralists' threaten Amazonia's environment, traditional peoples and the global climate*

Brazil's new president Bolsonaro and “ruralists” (large landholders and their representatives) have initiated a series of measures that we contend threaten Amazonia's environment and traditional peoples, as well as global climate. Bolsonaro appointed Ricardo Salles, a ruralist, as Environment Minister, effectively putting a ‘fox’ to guard the ‘chicken coop’.

The actions currently proposed by the new president, his ministers and his ruralist supporters are for weakening the country's environmental agencies and forest code, granting amnesty to deforestation, approving harmful agrochemicals, and reducing protected areas. Bolsonaro and key ministers deny the existence of anthropogenic climate change. Salles has proposed perverting the Amazon Fund to compensate those who are responsible for deforestation. The measures the new presidential administration has implemented and the expectation of impunity encouraged both by the measures

themselves and by the accompanying rhetoric have spurred increased deforestation, which contributes to climate change and to land conflicts with traditional peoples. The actions of Bolsonaro and his ministers favour expansion of monoculture plantations and cattle ranching in Amazonia.



An expected consequence of continued Amazonian deforestation is to decrease rainfall in the South and Southeast regions of Brazil and in neighbouring countries, such as Argentina. Domestic water supply in heavily populated Brazilian states such as São Paulo and Minas Gerais would be affected, as would hydroelectric power generation and agriculture. Carbon released by Amazon deforestation contributes to climate change around the globe. In the Amazon, invasions are already underway in indigenous lands and “conservation units” (protected areas for biodiversity).

Brazil’s National Congress and Public Ministry (a public prosecutor’s office for defending the people’s constitutional rights, including the right to an “ecologically balanced environment”) need to act in order to curb the dismantling of the country’s policies for the environment and human rights and to avoid the impacts described here. Ministerial appointments need to be based on technical knowledge rather than ideological or religious identity. Funding entities must begin to evaluate the risk of investment in projects that cause deforestation and land conflicts, thus contributing to global warming and to violation of human rights. Countries and companies that import Brazilian beef, soy and minerals are stimulating these impacts.

Read the full article, *Brazil’s new president and ‘ruralists’ threaten Amazonia’s environment, traditional peoples and the global climate*, which is freely available to download until 28th February