

International Coalition Calls for the EU to End Its Role in the Assault on the Amazon

By [Fern](#)

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On Jair Bolsonaro's 100th day in office, an international coalition of NGOs - including a group representing more than 300 Brazilian indigenous groups - have called for the European Union (EU) to end its complicity in the assault on indigenous rights and the destruction of the Amazon.

Since President Bolsonaro became leader of the world's "fourth largest democracy" on January 1, his government has dismantled environmental protections, incursions by armed invaders on Indigenous Peoples' lands have surged, and deforestation rates in the Amazon have risen.

The EU provides a huge market for Brazilian soy and beef, which drive deforestation and human rights abuses in Brazil on a vast scale. The EU is also Brazil's second largest trading partner, and together its Member States are Brazil's largest source of [foreign direct investment](#).

The coalition is calling for tough new EU laws guaranteeing that products sold in the EU do not cause deforestation and human rights abuses in Brazil.

"The EU already has laws to stop [illegally logged wood](#), [illegally sourced fish](#) and [conflict minerals](#) entering its markets. The unfolding destruction in Brazil shows the glaring need for similar laws for agricultural goods," said [Nicole Polsterer](#), Forests and Consumption campaigner at Fern, the forests and rights NGO.

"The EU must clean up its [agricultural] supply chains, make them transparent, and use its enormous economic leverage to reduce the threat Brazil's Indigenous Peoples face," she added.

Sônia Guajajara, coordinator of [Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil](#) (APIB) which represents more than 300 Brazilian indigenous groups, reinforced this call for EU action.

"The first 100 days of Bolsonaro's presidency are the latest chapter in a [long war](#) of [attrition](#) against Brazil's Indigenous People. The crimes that are being committed today are happening in the name of agricultural production. The EU must not evade its responsibility for this," Guajajara said.

"The EU must use its consumer power to ensure our rights are protected and our forests are preserved," she added.

The international call for EU action coincides with the release of a new Fern briefing, [100 Days of Bolsonaro, Ending the EU's role in the assault on the Amazon](#), which details the dizzying speed at which environmental laws have been eroded, and land grabs and attacks on indigenous communities have accelerated in the first three months of Bolsonaro's presidency. In January 2019, deforestation in the Amazon [reportedly rose](#) by 54 per cent compared to the same month in 2018.

As well as a new EU law preventing commodities being sold on the EU market which have caused deforestation or the violation of human rights, the briefing also calls the EU to use its economic leverage to protect Brazil's forests and Indigenous Peoples, by:

- Suspending its talks for a comprehensive [Free Trade Agreement](#) with the Mercosur trading bloc - of which Brazil is the largest and most powerful member - until Brazil renews its commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement, and the deal's Sustainability Impact Assessment is released publicly and its findings taken into account. The Mercosur deal should also include binding, enforceable provisions to end deforestation and respect customary tenure rights.
- The European External Action Service (EEAS) should strengthen the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy and include more proactive consultation with Brazilian civil society organisations. The EU should also monitor and respond to human rights violations and strengthen human rights defenders' protection mechanisms. For those most at risk, including Indigenous Peoples and environmental defenders, the EU should provide direct, urgent support where required, including through political representations.

[Perrine Fournier](#), Fern's Trade and Forests campaigner, said that signing the Mercosur trade deal as it stands, would exacerbate an already dangerous situation.

"The EU says it supports [values](#) based trade. Bolsonaro is the litmus test for this. Signing the Mercosur deal as it stands would mean renouncing the EU's commitment to end deforestation by 2020, sacrificing indigenous rights and forests on the altar of trade," she said.

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