
Brazilians celebrate Amazon Rainforest Day with protests

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Brasilia, September 5 (RHC)-- On September 5th, known as Amazon Rainforest Day, social and environmental movements, trade unions, religious groups, human rights activists, gender rights activists, professors and students are holding protests in several Brazilian cities in rejection of President Jair Bolsonaro's policies which encourage the conversion of the rainforests into agricultural lands.

“Not only has the fire destroyed the Amazon. What destroyed our Amazonian forests, rivers and communities are large companies, agribusiness, hydroelectric and timber concessions,” said Moroni Bemuyal Guimaraes, the Movement of People Affected by Barragens (MAB) spokesperson.

“In the state of Amapa, agricultural entrepreneurs are entering with force. Here we have four hydroelectrics that will generate a great havoc, mainly among riparian peoples, fishermen, Afro-descendant populations and indigenous communities.”

So far, the Brazilian local press has confirmed rallies in Belem, Itaituba, Altamira e Maraba (state of Para); Fortaleza, Caucaia and Jaguaribara (state of Ceara) and Manaus, Macapa, Porto Alegre, Porto Velho, Brasilia, Sao Paulo and Eldorado.

Preserving the Amazon should be one of our priorities; more and more, however, we see that the opposite is happening in the Bolsonaro administration. On Saturday 7 we will take to the streets in defense of the Amazon and education. September 5, Amazon Day!

Additionally, on September 7, Brazil's independence day, students will hold demonstrations to defend the Amazon and public education, both of which are also being threatened by Bolsonaro's privatization program.

Protests called by Brazilian organizations will be accompanied by activities such as conferences, music festivals and parades. With respect to the ongoing "cycle of exploitation" of Amazonian natural resources, Frede Renero, a MAB activist, said that the commercial use of forests does not usually generate significant revenues for the working people.

"Defending the Amazon is very important considering the previous economic cycles that this region has already lived, which showed that the population lost rights and their living conditions did not improve," Renero said.

"The Amazon should not serve to boost the situation of big bankers, landowners and companies that have been appropriating more and more territory with the intention of getting more money."

At the illegal land markets operating within the southern region of the Amazon, where the so-called 'deforestation arch' is located, "a 2.5-hectare pasture property can be worth up to US\$2,430... a rainforest area of the same size, however, is traded for only US\$120," Tatiana Farah holds in an investigation published by BuzzFeed-Brasil on Sep. 2.

"Deforesters want lands. Their business is as follows: they deforest now, wait a while, and sell after forming a farm," said Adelario Ronnau, who had been living in the Apui municipality, at the state of Amazonas, since 1983.

Edited by Ed Newman
