

## The ecocide of forests must end

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### **The protection of forests is essential to avoid climate breakdown.**

Forests burst with life, full of plants and animals found nowhere else. In the tropics, these range from orchids to orang-utans, and make up some of the most diverse, unique habitats on our planet.

Forests are vital stores of carbon, and destroying them will make meeting the targets of the Paris Agreement – already on a knife-edge – simply impossible.

Amazonia alone is also home to one million people, some of whom live in isolated, still uncontacted tribes, and many have been stewards of their ancestral lands for centuries or more.

### **Responsibility**

- Yet globally we are responsible for a remorseless wave of deforestation and destruction. After a brief period of hope for the Amazon, deforestation has skyrocketed under the Bolsonaro administration, up 88 percent in June 2019 in comparison to June 2018.
- The full force of the logging, mining and agriculture industries has been turned on indigenous communities, as people's homes and lives are wiped out intentionally to clear the way for industrial mega-farms to feed the global market. The same is happening in forests around the globe, from West Africa to West Papua.

- A small handful of commodities are the reason we are all partly responsible for this: soy, palm oil, paper and most of all cattle for beef and leather occupy more deforested land in Brazil than every other commodity combined. Global responsibility means global action is desperately needed.
- The Paris Agreement in 2015 explicitly called for forests to be preserved as a 'natural solution' to climate breakdown, taking carbon out of the atmosphere with no action required except to leave them alone, yet few countries include land use and forestry in their plans, and fewer still are acting on them.
- This loss is now so critical that some forests have shifted from taking in more carbon than they emit – known as a carbon sink – to being a source of emissions, and the Amazon, the biggest on the planet, is on track to be in this position in the next decade. This means that as the eyes of the world turn to Glasgow in November for the make-or-break COP26 climate negotiations, where countries have a final chance to commit to serious attempts to keep warming below 1.5 degrees, forests – and those who live in them – must be front and centre of the conversation.

## Benefits

- The first and most important reason for upholding the land tenure of indigenous communities is because it is *their land*. However, legally recognised indigenous and community forests also store more carbon than others, and so affirming and upholding rights to land is also an imperative from a climate perspective.
- The fact that natural solutions to the climate crisis have a whole host of additional benefits is yet another reason to keep forests standing - hundreds of thousands of children in the USA alone have been saved from leukemia by chemicals derived from one single rainforest plant, for example. If we burn the book of life before we read it, we cannot know what we might have found.
- From the devastating climate impacts to the consistent links to the most appalling human rights abuses including Brazilian beef giants allegedly linked to a recent massacre of people in the Amazon, the picture can seem overwhelmingly bleak.
- But we are not powerless. Decisions you can make every day can help to save forests and forest peoples. You can write to your politicians, demanding that they pressurise their governments to get serious at the upcoming climate talks. You can cut down on beef consumption, perhaps starting by avoiding the blacklist of the worst offenders. You can support the charities and NGOs fighting for the survival of these incredible, essential places.

SOURCE:- <https://theecologist.org/2020/mar/27/ecocide-forests-must-end>