

Drought shrinks Amazon River to lowest level in 47 years

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Picture released on September 2, 2010 by the Peruvian Navy Hydrological service showing a motorized canoe travelling between protruding sandbars due to the low water level affecting the Amazon River on August 27, 2010. A severe drought parching northern Brazil this year has shrunk the mighty Amazon River -- the world's longest river -- to its lowest level in 47 years, officials said Wednesday.

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The waterway's depth at Manaus, the main city in the [Amazon](#) region, was just 19.34 meters (63.45 feet) -- well below its average of 23.25 meters (76.28 feet), the country's Geological Service told AFP.

The last time the river was at such a low level was in 1963.

Scientists say it appears Brazil is headed for its worst [drought](#) since that year. Final data to be collected up to October were expected to confirm that.

The withering of the Amazon has produced unusual scenes of children playing football in the dried-up riverbed of a tributary, the Quarenta, that crosses Manaus.

Worse, seven remote towns upstream that rely on water traffic as their main link to civilization have been cut off as their own tributary has all but disappeared.

"There are towns inaccessible by foot, and we need helicopters," the mayor of one of the towns told the Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper.

Some residents who lived through the 1963 drought said they were not so hard up this time, as they have mineral water and [water](#) trucks available.

"The drought is affecting river traffic, but today we can take a plane if we have to," said resident Joao Texeira, 74.

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