

The Amazon is burning and smoke from the fires can be seen from space

August 21 2019, by N'dea Yancey-Bragg



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Forest fires in the Amazon are generating smoke that can be seen from space and may have caused a daytime blackout more than 1,700 miles away in the country's largest city.

In the middle of the day on Monday, the sky above Sao Paulo was blanketed by smoke from the wildfires raging in the Amazon region, according to local media reports. The smoke resulting from some of these wildfires was also captured in satellite images released by NASA last week.

"The smoke did not come from fires from the state of Sao Paulo, but from very dense and wide fires that have been going on for several days in Rondonia and Bolivia. The [cold front](#) changed the direction of the winds and transported this smoke to Sao Paulo," Josélia Pegorim, Climatempo meteorologist, told Globo.

Reuters reported the Amazon rainforest has experienced a record number of fires this year, citing new data released by the country's space agency The National Institute for Space Research (INPE). The agency said its satellite data detected more than 72,000 fires since January, an 83% increase over the same period of 2018.

Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro, who recently fired the space agency's director, brushed off the news, telling Reuters it was attributed to the time of year when farmers use fire to clear the land.

The firing came after Bolsonaro criticized INPE deforestation data which showed a significant increase in illegal logging, claiming officials had manipulated figures to make his administration look bad. The INPE found 370 square miles of Amazon forest were lost in June—an 88% increase from the same month last year.

Since taking office in January, the administration of Bolsonaro has consistently clashed with environmentalists and others over possibly opening up the Amazon rainforest to development and agribusiness.

Ricardo Mello, head of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

Amazon Program, told the BBC the fires were "a consequence of the increase in deforestation seen in recent figures."

Many on Twitter using the #PrayforAmazonia criticized Bolsonaro's environmental policies and inaction on the fires.

Amazonas, the largest state in Brazil, has already declared a state of emergency over the fires, EuroNews reported.

Though the Amazon rainforest has been [fire](#)-resistant for much of its history because of its natural moisture and humidity, drought and human activities are causing wildfires, according to NASA.

"The intensity and frequency of droughts in turn, have been linked with increases in regional deforestation and [anthropogenic climate change](#)," the release from NASA said.

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