

# Brazil to deploy army to fight Amazon deforestation

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Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, pictured on May 6, 2020, faced scathing criticism in 2019 for initially downplaying Amazon wildfires

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro authorized the army Thursday to fight Amazon wildfires and deforestation, amid warnings the world's biggest

rainforest is disappearing even faster than during record devastation last year.

The far-right leader has faced criticism on the world stage for record-breaking wildfires in 2019, his first year in office.

And though fire season will only start in late May with dryer weather, there are already worrying signs for this year.

Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon for the first three months of the year increased by more than 50 percent from the same period last year, to 796 square kilometers.

Bolsonaro signed a decree authorizing the [armed forces](#) to take "preventive and restrictive action against environmental crimes, namely illegal deforestation and wildfires."

The order will be in effect from May 11 to June 10 in protected areas, indigenous reserves and other federal land in the Amazon region.

Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon soared 85 percent last year, to 10,123 square kilometers (3,900 square miles), the first time it crossed the 10,000 mark since records began in 2008, according to official data based on [satellite images](#).

The destruction is largely caused by illegal logging, mining and farming on protected lands.

Bolsonaro wants to open up more such lands to [economic activity](#), arguing Brazil's indigenous peoples should reap the benefits of the natural resources on their territory.

Bolsonaro also deployed the army to the Amazon last year after facing

scathing criticism for initially downplaying the wildfires.

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