

Despite Lula's promises, deforestation still rampant in Brazil

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Aerial view of a deforested area of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil's state of Roraima.

Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon rainforest in the first quarter of 2023 was one of the worst on record, according to official figures released on

Friday.

Those figures show the scale of the task facing leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, just 100 days into his return to power.

Satellite images from the INPE national space investigations institute showed 356 square kilometers of forest had been destroyed in March in the Brazilian Amazon.

That is a 14 percent increase compared to March 2022, when far-right president and climate change skeptic Jair Bolsonaro was serving his last year in office.

In the first quarter of 2023, Amazon [deforestation](#) was the second highest on record for that period with 844 square kilometers destroyed.

Only the first quarter of 2022 was higher with 941 square kilometers of deforestation.

After four years of Bolsonaro's government, which removed various environmental protections, it could take time to improve deforestation figures, Mariana Napolitano, the conservation manager for the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in Brazil, told AFP.

"The figures show there is a complex scenario in the face of a weakening of control in the region and the discourse of the last few years that favored illegality," she said.

"Even though the current government has shown its intention to seriously fight deforestation, it will take time to change the scenario," added Napolitano.

On the first day of his third term in office, Lula signed several decrees

scrapping measures that were harmful to the environment and created a working group to tackle deforestation.

He also reactivated the Amazon Fund, an initiative supported primarily by Norway and Germany that was suspended in 2019 due to Bolsonaro's policies.

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