

Nearly 3,000 fires in Brazilian Amazon in February, new record

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Drought devastated the Brazilian Amazon between June and November last year.

Nearly 3,000 forest fires were registered in the Brazilian Amazon this month, the highest for any February since records began in 1999, and

made more likely by climate change, according to experts.

Brazil's INPE space research institute said Wednesday its satellites had picked up 2,940 fires so far this month, 67 percent more than the previous high of 1,761 recorded in February 2007 and four times more than in the same month last year.

"The climate factor certainly plays a fundamental role in this anomaly," Ane Alencar, scientific director of the IPAM Amazonia research institute, told AFP.

The northern part of the rainforest was hardest hit, particularly the state of Roraima, home to the Yanomami Indigenous reserve.

"We have seen the Earth break... temperature records. Every year is the hottest year and this has a synergy with climate phenomena" such as droughts, said Alencar.

Drought devastated the Brazilian Amazon between June and November last year, stoking huge fires, reducing or wiping out major water reserves, wreaking havoc with wildlife and affecting millions of people.

A study last month by the World Weather Attribution (WWA) said [climate change](#) was the main driver of the "exceptional drought" in the world's largest rainforest.

The WWA is a scientific project that seeks to quantify how climate change influences the intensity and likelihood of a particular extreme weather event.

Such environmental "stress," said Alencar, "generates all the necessary conditions for each fire to become a large fire," adding that some of the blazes may have been the result of forest clearing for agriculture.

Deforestation halved

Figures released last month showed that deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon had fallen by half last year as President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's government bolstered environmental policing.

Satellite monitoring detected 5,152 square kilometers (nearly 2,000 square miles) of [forest cover](#) destroyed in the Brazilian part of the rainforest last year, down 50 percent from 2022.

That still represented a loss 29 times the size of Washington DC in Brazil's share of the world's biggest rainforest, whose carbon-absorbing trees play a vital role in curbing climate change.

After beating far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro in a divisive election in 2022, veteran leftist Lula returned to office on January 1, 2023 vowing "Brazil is back" as a partner in the fight against climate change.

He also vowed to end illegal deforestation in Brazil by 2030.

Agribusiness ally Bolsonaro (2019-2022) had drawn international criticism for presiding over a 75-percent increase in average annual deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon versus the previous decade.

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