

# Deforestation of Amazon rainforest hit record high in

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Environmental researchers said they were not surprised to see destruction still rising and pointed to President Jair Bolsonaro's weakening of environmental protections since he took office in 2019



Despite government pledges to bring deforestation under control, 430 square kilometres of rainforest were lost in the month of January (Photo: Getty)



**By Tom Bawden**

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**Deforestation** of the Brazilian part of the Amazon rainforest hit the highest level in at least seven years last month, soaring to five times the rate seen a year earlier.

Despite government pledges to bring **deforestation** under control, 430 square kilometres (166 square miles) of rainforest were lost in the month of January – the highest since records began in 2015, according to satellite data from government space research agency Inpe.

Environmental researchers said they were not surprised to see destruction still rising and pointed to President Jair Bolsonaro's weakening of environmental protections since he took office in 2019.

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“Even in January, when deforestation is usually lower due to the rainy season in the Amazon region, destruction has dramatically skyrocketed,” said Cristiane Mazzetti, of Greenpeace Brazil.

“The government has created a golden opportunity for those who want to clear forests illegally or seize public lands; there is a deliberate lack of environmental inspection,” she said.

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Britaldo Soares Filho, an environmental researcher at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, said high prices for beef, soy and other commodities is increasing the demand for cheap land which is, in turn, push up deforestation in illegal landgrabs.

“People might be surprised that it didn't increase even more. There is a race to deforest the Amazon,” he said.

Brazil's Environment Ministry said that making comparisons using single months does not provide the best picture, stating that in August to January deforestation fell slightly compared to the same period a year ago.

Furthermore, the federal government is acting more forcefully in 2022 to fight against environmental crimes, the ministry told Reuters.

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