



## Media briefing

### **Ashes, cattle and impunity in the Brazilian Amazon: “Day of Fire” one year later**

Last year, there was a massive coordinated wave of simultaneous series of fires in the forest and nearby land for the so called “Day of Fire” in the Amazon in Pará State, on August 10th and 11th.<sup>1</sup> One year later, most of the cattle ranchers associated with the illegal burnings have not been charged. Almost half of hotspots registered in those two days took place within cattle farms. Fires in the Amazon in August 2019 were the worst since 2010.

“The world witnessed brazen coordinated fires during the “Day of Fire” last year, but almost nothing has been done to punish the guilty. Of the 207 cattle ranches that burned forest areas in these two days, only 5% were fined. This is not a case of Bolsonaro’s government overlooking what happened, this government is fast tracking a radical anti-environmental agenda and effectively granting impunity to cattle ranchers that set forests on fire and forest destroyers” says Rômulo Batista, campaigner at Greenpeace Brazil.

Greenpeace Brazil assessed hundreds of properties in this region that had fires on those two days along highway BR-163 and São Félix do Xingu and found that half of the fires hotspots registered on the “Day of Fire” (49,96%) were set within 478 rural properties registered in Pará State’s environmental register, SICAR. This means that the identities of those holding these 478 properties could have been easily accessed by authorities. Over 99% of them are cattle ranches, presenting traces of pastures within their boundaries.<sup>2</sup> At least 66 of these properties already had citations for environmental crimes before the Day of Fire.

Greenpeace Brazil’s analysis looked at environmental registration within municipalities of Novo Progresso, São Félix do Xingu, Itaituba and Altamira - which are amongst the 10 municipalities with the highest deforestation rate in 2019 - as well as Jacareacanga e Trairão.<sup>3</sup> These municipalities accounted for 79% of all hotspots in the State of Para in August 2019. The rest of hotspots were distributed among the remaining 106 municipalities in the State.

“The government could have easily held the perpetrators accountable but there was no action to punish them nor does the government have a plan to address deforestation in this region rife with forest destruction. Instead of combating criminal behavior and protecting Indigenous forest

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/26/brazil-amazon-fire-day-warning>  
<http://www.folhadoprogresso.com.br/dia-do-fogo-produtores-planejam-data-para-queimada-na-regiao/>  
<https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-49453037>

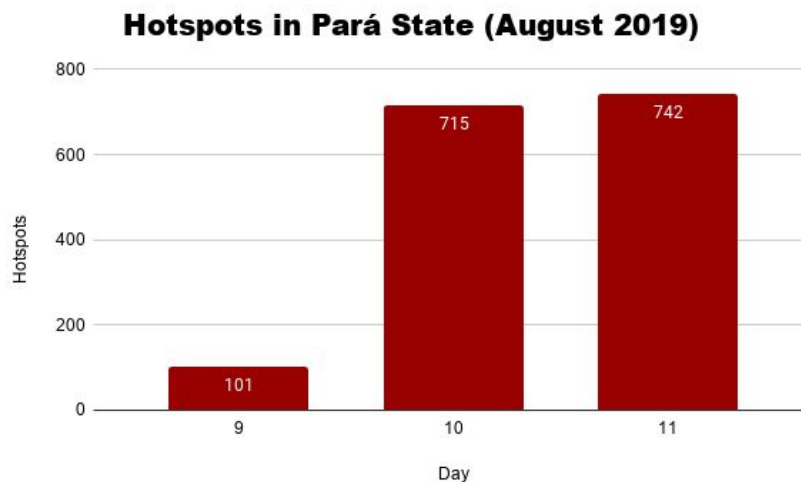
<sup>2</sup> MapBiomias 2018

<sup>3</sup> As per SICAR in Para’s state, last updated February 2020

guardians hit hard by COVID, this government continues to reduce environmental protection and ally itself with those who want to destroy the forest.”, concludes Batista.

### **The day of fire - a recap**

A year ago, in Pará State, several rural property landholders and cattle ranchers orchestrated a notorious wave of Amazon forest burning that they named “Day of Fire”. The participants’ intention, as told to local media<sup>4</sup>, was to send a political message to support the President’s radical anti-environmental agenda. The ranchers organised the coordinated burning activities over a whatsapp group called “Sertão” and reportedly hired arsonists who set land on fire along the highway BR-163.<sup>5</sup>



On these 2 days, August 10th and 11th, 2019, there were 1,457 hotspots in the state, an increase of *almost 20 times* (1923%) when compared to the same period in the previous year . The burnings appeared dramatically; while there were 101 fire hotspots on August 9th, there were 715 hotspots the following day, a 7-fold increase in just a single day. 53 of the “Day of Fire”’s hotspots were registered in Indigenous Lands and 534 on Conservation Units. Of all hot spots, 580 were registered in forested areas, which represents 39.8% of all hotspots in the state of Para in those two days, and 32.8% in previously deforested areas.<sup>6</sup>

The “Day of Fire” is still under investigation by local authorities in Brazil. The Federal Prosecutor’s Office (MPF) in Pará initiated an investigation on the decrease in the number of

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.folhadoprogesso.com.br/dia-do-fogo-produtores-planejam-data-para-queimada-na-regiao/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oeco.org.br/blogs/salada-verde/dia-do-fogo-foi-promovido-pelo-grupo-no-whatsapp-chamado-sertao/> and <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/26/brazil-amazon-fire-day-warning>

<sup>6</sup> according to 2019 official annual deforestation monitoring system (PRODES)

environmental inspections in the region and the absence of the State Military Police to support inspection teams.

At the end of July this year and as part of efforts to monitor deforestation and fires in the Amazon, a Greenpeace Brazil team flew over the region the “Day of Fire” covered and documented areas that had already been completely deforested, others that are now degraded - which might be set on fire again this year - and others that have already been converted into pasture, with meat production in operation.

**Images and footage of this overflight can be accessed [here](#).**