

# After Covering the Paris Notre Dame Cathedral Fire Non-Stop, Media Silent as the Amazon Burns for Weeks

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Region: [Latin America & Caribbean](#)  
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*When the famous Notre Dame Cathedral erupted in flames last April, images of the blaze were plastered across television and computer screens alike. For days on end, mainstream media networks around the world devoted round-the-clock coverage to this burning church. While the burning of such a historical place was undoubtedly a tragic incident, the coverage devoted to it versus the coverage — or, rather, lack there of — given to the Amazon rain forest fires is insulting.*

*After the fires in Paris, donors from all over Europe came together and pledged millions to rebuild it and the work started almost immediately. Consequently, the Amazon has been on fire for three weeks, and there are no calls for unity, no 24-hour media coverage, and no one is pledging anything to help stop it. In fact, if you search Google News for “Amazon,” the first ten stories are about Jeff Bezos. And, if you look for “Amazon Fire” you get ads for the tablet.*

I heard about this horrible fire in the Amazon. Googled Amazon fire and hit News and this is all that came up.....Earth - it was fun while it lasted.  
[pic.twitter.com/IWOn8VbgRo](https://pic.twitter.com/IWOn8VbgRo)

— Patrick J Adams (@halfadams) [August 21, 2019](#)

The fires burning across the South American rain forest have become so intense that NASA has photographed them from space. The smoke from the fire is literally blacking out the sky in São Paulo, and the fires are over 1,700 miles away. The scope of this damage is massive and threatens the entire world, yet the media is barely mentioning it.

This is Sao Paulo today, 4PM. The cloud from the burning of Amazon rainforest in Rondonia, covered the city. Sao Paulo is 3300km (2052 miles) distant from Boa Vista. Athens is closer to London than Sao Paulo is to Boa Vista. Just to give you an idea of the damage. [pic.twitter.com/rVVBFFxPZS](https://pic.twitter.com/rVVBFFxPZS)

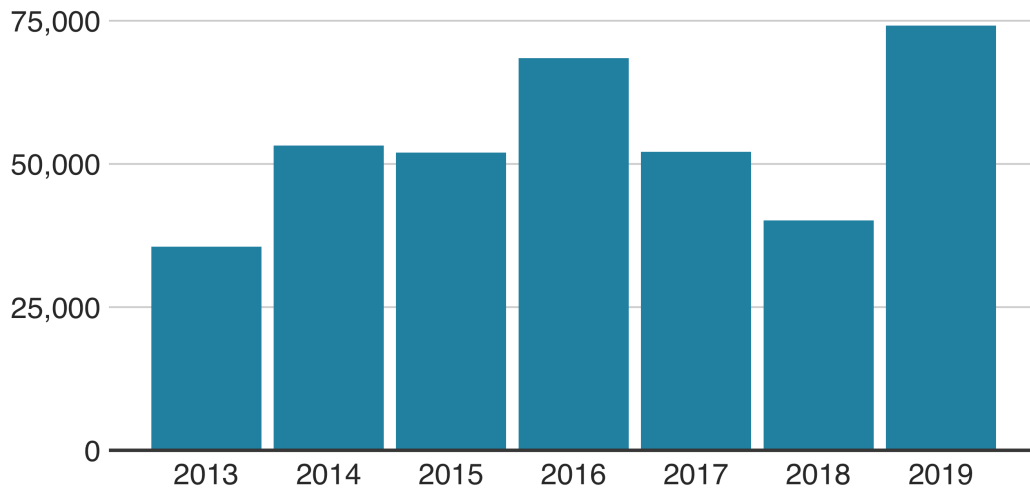
— Beyond the Shadows (@BeyondDShadows) [August 19, 2019](#)

To be clear, the Amazon experiences fires every year. However, Brazil's Instituto Nacional

de Pesquisas Espaciais, (INPE) or National Institute for Space Research said [its satellite data showed an 84% increase on the same period in 2018](#).

## This year has seen more than double the number of fires in Brazil than in 2013

Total number of fires between 1 January - 20 August



Source: National Institute for Space Research

BBC

Amazonas, the largest state in Brazil, recently declared a state of emergency over the forest fires, according to [Euro News](#).

The single largest tropical rain forest on the planet — responsible for 20 percent of the clean air we breathe — has been burning for three weeks, and the media is mum.

And cap wants to talk about Jill stien ? RT [@Y2SHAF](#): a reminder that the amazon forest has been on fire for 3 weeks now and because of the lack of media coverage people don't know about it. this is one of most important ecosystems on earth [pic.twitter.com/JERjoKbWjE](https://pic.twitter.com/JERjoKbWjE)

— John Cusack (@johncusack) [August 21, 2019](#)

The Brazilian government is attempting to downplay the fires as well, with President Jair Bolsonaro claiming the fires are a political stunt to attack his administration.

“So, there could be..., I’m not affirming it, criminal action by these ‘NGOers’ to call attention against my person, against the government of Brazil. This is the war that we are facing,” he said in a Facebook Live session on Wednesday.

He said the fires are normal, claiming it was the “season of the queimada” or when farmers use fire to clear land. But the INPE disagrees and noted that the number of fires was not in line with those normally reported during the dry season.

“There is nothing abnormal about the climate this year or the rainfall in the Amazon region, which is just a little below average,” Inpe researcher Alberto

Setzer told Reuters. “The dry season creates the favorable conditions for the use and spread of fire, but starting a fire is the work of humans, either deliberately or by accident.”

As BBC [pointed out](#), Ricardo Mello, head of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Amazon Program, said the fires were “a consequence of the increase in deforestation seen in recent figures.”

So here we have the “[lungs of our planet](#)” quite literally going up in smoke and the Western media seemingly couldn’t care less. Why is that?

Well, one potential reason for this silence could be due to beef. Seriously.

To dispel any preconceived notions, I eat beef. But I seek out sustainably grown, grass-fed beef that is humanely produced. Because this beef is produced in an environmentally friendly and more sustainable manner, it is more expensive and thus eaten less often—which, if the US had a true free market, would apply to regular beef as well. But this is not the case because the government heavily subsidizes factory farming.

Because factory farming cattle takes such a massive toll on the environment, the beef industry is in a constant state of damage control and subsequent lobbying.

It is estimated that approximately 80 percent of rain forest destruction in the Amazon is done to make way for cattle farming.

Instead of preventing the wholesale destruction of rain forests through illegal logging, and curbing the rampant pollution caused by cattle farming, the Brazilian government — which is staunchly supported by the West — has proven to be in the pocket of the industry and has done everything in their power to worsen the problem.

When it was discovered that beef industry hitmen were murdering journalists and activists who exposed their crimes in the rain forests, instead of prosecuting the murderers, the government increased the criminalization of activism and journalism. And in some instances, the murders were even carried out by government agencies.

As TFTP [reported](#), more than 180 people were killed in 2015 alone for attempting to prevent the illegal logging in the rain forest to make way for beef production.

According to recent data from Metonomics, the American government spends \$38 billion each year to subsidize the meat and dairy industries, but only 0.04 percent of that (i.e., \$17 million) each year to subsidize fruits and vegetables.

Beef is big business and it is big business that sponsors the mainstream media. When people start to wonder why the lungs of the planet are on fire, they will start asking questions that many people in this industry do not want answered. Therefore, the media has an incentive to stay quiet to keep their advertisers happy.

Whatever the reason is for the media’s lack of attention to the fires in the Amazon, the damage done by remaining silent is the same.

As Jessie Stephens eloquently noted in a [recent article](#) comparing the Notre Dame fire to the Amazon, “perhaps global awareness will put more pressure on President Bolsonaro to act.”

In stark contrast, the ashes had not yet settled on the 4th arrondissement of Paris when President Emmanuel Macron addressed the nation.

"I tell you solemnly tonight: We will rebuild this cathedral," he said, standing outside the Notre Dame Cathedral.

The fire still burned as Macron said, "Notre Dame of Paris is our history. The epicenter of our lives. It's the many books, the paintings, those that belong to all French men and French women, even those who've never come."

We watched as Parisians covered their mouths in horror, as they felt a piece of themselves burn.

That same horror, for a Cathedral that could be rebuilt, with beams and wood and stained glass windows, needs to be applied to a rain forest that won't be so easy to put back together.

UPDATE: Good news! After the major grassroots efforts to draw attention to the Amazon began to go viral, mainstream media has actually started reporting on it. This is an example of how refusing to stay silent on issues can force the mainstream to give it attention. Now, we just need to act on it.

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