

Turning the Amazon into smoke is a shock for the Brazilian Nation, article by Francisco Piyãko (it will soon be published by The Guardian)

The actual Brazilian government is ending environmental legislation in the name of progress, of development. It has even no scruple to destroy the forest. The approval of the project, which makes environmental licensing more flexible, by the Chamber of Deputies on May 12th, is part of this government's strategy of "letting run the cattle herds" (as said by the Environment Minister Ricardo Salles last year, 2020) and destroying what is richest in Brazil, the Amazon Forest.

Turning all this into smoke will be a shock for the Brazilian nation, for the Brazilian people. This is a matter of conscience, society must act!

Among the proposed atrocities there is the exemption from licensing for 13 types of activities, including works on water and sewage treatment systems and stations, and infrastructure maintenance works on pre-existing facilities, such as roads.

We just had the Climate Leaders' Summit of 2021, preparatory to the United Nations Climate Conference. The Brazilian government, in its speech, compromised and lied, as it is passing and imposing a law that destroys our Environment. The Brazilian Congress and government are trying to dismantle the country's environmental laws, it is a crime against Brazil, against the Amazon Forest.

This is just the beginning of a set of projects that aim only to destroy all legal safeguards against deforestation and land grabbing. In addition to the general environmental licensing law, the land regularization law, the land-grabbing bill, and also the regulation of mining on indigenous lands will soon be on the agenda of the Brazilian government.

We hope that the Brazilian Supreme Court enforces the Constitution to protect Brazil, because here there is as good as no opposition from political parties, of opposition to this government, here there are those who are in favour of Brazil and those who are against it. The Amazon Forest is part of the Brazil that this government and its supporters are destroying.

In addition to this direct attack on environmental laws, Bolsonaro's government, together with backward political forces from the State of Acre, wants to open a road cutting through one of the most biodiverse sites in the Amazon, the "Serra do Divisor National Park", in the Upper Juruá region, a park that borders our Ashaninka Indigenous Land on the Rio Amônia and many other indigenous communities.

The draft bill number 6,024, authored by federal deputy Mara Rocha (from the Brazilian Social Democracy Party), in addition to wanting to extinguish the "Serra do Divisor National Park", also aims to change the limits of the "Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve" in the town of Xapuri, State Acre. We, Peoples of the Forest, are surrounded by our enemies on all sides.

Turning all this forest into smoke, it will be a shock and a huge damage for the Brazilian Nation. I repeat, it is not just a discussion of opposition to the government, it is a matter of

conscience. It is necessary for society to act, we, as a Brazilian society, have to find a way, a joint strategy with everyone, to face and fight these attacks.

One strategy must be the Brazilian presidential election next year, in 2022. We need to make a better choice, because it's the only way for us to change who's in Congress and in the Presidency. The other strategy is to restart our struggle, to go back to the time when the Forest Peoples fought, facing eye to eye, who wanted to destroy our forests.

We, the Ashaninka People of the Amonia River in Brazil, will not budge from this fight! The forest is our life, our home, it is the reason for everything in our history. We call on all Forest Peoples, cities and youth to help in the fight to protect our biodiversity.

Francisco Piyãko is a leader of the Ashaninka People of the Amonia River, of the Apiwtxa Village, in the Brazilian State of Acre and Coordinator of the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Juruá River (OPIRJ). He was secretary of state in the government of Acre and advisor to the presidency of Funai.