

## OPEN LETTER FROM INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

### DECLARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY DUE TO THE LACK OF WILL OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF BRAZIL AND BOLIVIA TO PROTECT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND BIODIVERSITY IN RESPONSE TO THE FOREST FIRES

Quito, Lima, Bogota, Caracas, La Paz, Brasilia, Georgetown, Paramaribo, Cayenne

23 August 2019

*Indigenous Peoples resist a Genocide!*

#### CONSIDERING

That our historical struggle has won the recognition of our rights in different international instruments such as: ILO Convention 169, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the OAS, the Amazon Cooperation Convention, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, among others.

That there is a common project of Indigenous Peoples and civil society to build an alternative development model where the protection of biodiversity, climate stability and our traditional and spiritual knowledge systems prioritize.

That ignoring International Declarations and Conventions, governments like those of Brazil and Bolivia demonstrate their negligence, racism and structural discrimination against life, seeking to favor large economic groups that seek to turn the Amazon into lots for mega agricultural projects, mining and energy projects.

That the impact of the fires means the death of thousands of beings that inhabit this biome and of the livelihoods of local producers and Indigenous Peoples, leading to serious social, economic and public health problems.

That the life of the planet is at risk, given that with the advance of the flames, desertification increases, the quality of water and atmosphere decreases and climate change accelerates.

According to Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE), deforestation in the country's Amazonian states totals 10,788 km<sup>2</sup> in 2019, equivalent to the size of Jamaica. Between January and August 2019, 72,843 fires were recorded compared to 39,759 during the same period last year, and it is estimated that more than 700,000 hectares of forest burned after almost 18 days of neglect. Between August 20 and 21 of 2019 alone, there were 43,752 outbreaks of fires in all of South America, of which 59% occurred in Brazil (25,871), 27.8% in Bolivia (12,144), 4.7% in Paraguay (2,054) and 1.2% in Peru (522).

The continuation of the fires in the Amazon put at risk 350 indigenous groups, 6.7 million km<sup>2</sup> of forests, 44,000 plant species, 2,200 animal species, 10% of the planet's carbon reserve, 2,500 freshwater fish species, 11,000 years of settlements, 1 million km<sup>2</sup> of aquatic ecosystems, 17 to 20% of the planet's freshwater and 34 million directly-affected people. On this last point, according to preliminary data, more than 100,000 indigenous people have been affected.

In view of this, **WE DECLARE**

- The governments of Jair Bolsonaro and Evo Morales responsible for the extinction and environmental and cultural genocide that is currently taking place in the Amazon. That by their action and omission this emergency becomes more serious every day representing irreparable losses for the planet. Therefore, we declare these two Governments **NON GRATA** for the Amazon Basin.
- That the responsibility of these leaders is aggravated by their pointing to all indigenous and social organizations as being responsible for the damages caused by their economic policies that favor the indiscriminate extraction of all biodiversity and that ignore the rights of Indigenous Peoples and mother earth.
- That in the face of this, social, cultural, political and economic sanction is necessary for these governments and the empowerment of civil society for the sovereign exercise of the protection of life and flip around the policies that define the wrong "development" for the Amazon.
- The need to act immediately against the criminal actions that have generated this unprecedented tragedy, at a time when climatic stability is at its most critical point.

**We support** the position of Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon of Brazil - COIAB - to continue on the path of struggle against the visions and actions of the Brazilian government that consistently violate fundamental indigenous rights and humanity.

**We support** the position of the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia - CIDOB - in rejecting and condemning the Bolivian government for perpetrating this environmental and social disaster in order to promote an economic agenda contrary to indigenous and mother earth's rights.

**We request** the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to the United Nations to make a statement on the need to adopt immediate measures to address this emergency and prevent its recurrence.

**We request** the mobilization of international cooperation and other allies with humanitarian purposes so that the basic needs of the peoples affected by this calamity can be met and the restoration of the affected biodiversity can begin immediately.

**We recognize** the heroic work of the Indigenous Peoples and our allies from civil society who are standing up to stop the conflagrations.

We call for the unity and solidarity of all the Indigenous Peoples of Abya Yala and the World to denounce and put an end to the genocide and ecocide that the ancestral territories of the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon are suffering.

**Our Mother Earth depends on the Amazon Basin, allowing its devastation implies the extermination of Humanity.**

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