

Bolsonaro attacks Pope Francis over pontiff's plea to protect the Amazon

Pope urged Catholics to 'feel outrage' over Amazon destruction

Bolsonaro: 'What is Greenpeace? Nothing but rubbish'

Staff and agencies in Brasilia

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Jair Bolsonaro also said: 'All Australia caught fire and nobody's talking about Australia. Where is the zealotry for Australia?' Photograph: Adriano Machado/Reuters

Brazil's far-right president **Jair Bolsonaro** has lashed out at **Pope Francis** after the pontiff pleaded for the protection of the Amazon rainforest, and attacked the environmental group Greenpeace as "rubbish".

"Pope Francis said yesterday the Amazon is his, the world's, everyone's," said Bolsonaro, who has often railed against international criticism of his environmental policies as an attack on Brazilian sovereignty.

"Well, the pope may be Argentinian, but God is Brazilian."

The comment on Thursday came a day after Francis published a text urging Catholics to "feel outrage" over the exploitation of indigenous people and devastation caused by mining and deforestation in the Amazon.

The comments also coincided with a visit to the Vatican by the former Brazilian

president **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva** – a fierce opponent of Bolsonaro. Lula met and received a blessing from Pope Francis and said on Twitter that the two discussed “prospects for a more just and fraternal world”.



Lula



@LulaOficial

Encontro com o Papa Francisco para conversar sobre um mundo mais justo e fraterno.

Foto: Ricardo Stuckert



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Since taking office in January 2019, Bolsonaro has faced condemnation from environmentalists and the international community over his policies on the world's largest rainforest, which was devastated by record fires last year.

Last week, he again drew criticism for **proposing a bill that would allow** mining, farming and hydroelectric power projects on formerly protected Amazon land, calling it a “dream”.

Deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon increased 85.3% in Bolsonaro's first year in office, to more than 9,000 sq km (3,500 sq miles).

Speaking to journalists outside the presidential residence in Brasília, Bolsonaro questioned why there had not been, in his view, a similar world reaction to the recent **bushfires** in Australia, which burned more than 100,000 sq km (around 39,000 sq miles).

“All Australia caught fire and nobody's talking about Australia. Where is the zealotry for Australia?” he said.

Bolsonaro also launched a new attack on Greenpeace.

“What is this crap called **Greenpeace**? Nothing but rubbish,” he said when asked about his moves to promote what he calls “sustainable development” by opening protected areas of the Amazon to mining and farming.

Greenpeace has been an outspoken critic of Bolsonaro's policies, accusing him of a “racist, anti-environmental agenda” that harms Brazil's environment and its indigenous peoples.

The Brazilian leader often answers his critics with vitriolic attacks.

In October, he **tried, without evidence, to link Greenpeace to a massive oil spill** off Brazil's north-east coast, calling it a “terrorist act”.