

COVID-19 Threatens Indigenous People in Brazil as Deforestation in the Amazon Continues

The Karipuna people in the Brazilian Amazon are in isolation due to COVID-19, but the presence of loggers close to their villages is compromising their efforts to stay safe. The Karipuna Indigenous People's Association (Apoika), Indigenous Missionary Council (Cimi), and Greenpeace Brasil have filed a joint complaint with the local federal prosecutor's office. Multiple complaints by both Brazil and international agencies have been submitted in regards to relentless logging and land invasion in the Rondônia state where the Karipuna live. The current pandemic means the invasion of indigenous land is especially dangerous for the occupants of the land.

We are scared that one of these invaders will bring the virus inside our territory...Bolsonaro has told these people that it's just a little flu and that they can go back to work."

Adriano Karipuna, one of the group's leaders – Mongabay

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The Yanomami people in the Roraima state are experiencing the same threats. Illegal mining activity in the region has not ceased during the pandemic, and a 15-year-old Yanomami boy has died from the coronavirus.

Both the Amazon and the indigenous peoples who live there are vulnerable right now. Many native customs facilitate the spread of respiratory diseases. Other factors like poor sanitation, immune systems that are not used to contact with

many modern diseases, and a lack of healthcare facilities will exacerbate the risk. Meanwhile, deforestation attempts have not slowed. Clearance rates are 10% higher this year than they were for the same period last year. In addition, deforestation figures for August 2019 to the end of March 2020 are twice the rate they were for August 2018 to the end of March 2019.

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Sources:

- *Amazon indigenous put at risk by Brazil's feeble Covid-19 response: Critics – Mongabay*
- *In the midst of the pandemic, squatters and invaders approach Karipuna village – CIMI.org*
- *Amid covid-19, gold digging advances and approaches isolated Indians in Roraima – BBC Brasil*
- *Boy from isolated Amazon tribe dies of COVID-19, raising fears of devastating outbreak – Japan Times*