



International Day of Action to Defend the Brazilian Amazon

Over the last two months, the Amazon and its people have faced a growing assault. The Brazilian Congress is on the verge of approving a major rollback of the Brazilian Forestry Code, the disastrous Belo Monte Dam was approved in flagrant violation of Brazilian legislation and international norms, and forest guardians are facing a new wave of murder and intimidation.

The time has come to take action. Across Brazil, protests against mounting threats to the Amazon are intensifying, placing unprecedented pressure on the Brazilian government to respond. Global solidarity

is a critical component of the movement for environmental sustainability and human rights.

What is the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Dam?

After receiving an illegal license to begin construction on June 1st 2011, the Belo Monte Dam project is already wreaking havoc in the region, causing displacement of urban and rural populations that could eventually drive more than 40,000 from their homes, while placing overwhelming strain on social services and sparking a rapid rise in crime. Work camps are being built, forests

are being decimated, and the Xingu River is under imminent threat.

In order to feed the Belo Monte Dam powerhouse, up to 80% of the Xingu River will be diverted from its original course, causing a permanent drought on the river's "Big Bend," leading to a human rights crisis as the Juruna and Arara indigenous peoples are forced from their ancestral riverine territories.

The construction of the Belo Monte Dam is an announcement of disaster, but it could be just the beginning. Belo Monte is the latest of a major onslaught of dams planned in the Amazon, which will have dev-

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www.tinyurl.com/amazonsolidarity



astating impacts for the local and global environment, drive massive deforestation and climate change, and trample on the rights of indigenous peoples and other local communities.

There are Alternatives! Belo Monte is Not the Answer.

The Brazilian government presents Belo Monte as a solution to the country’s growing energy needs. Yet it is an enormously inefficient dam, generating an average of only 39% of its producing capacity. On the other hand, studies show that the country could cut the expected demand for electricity by 40% through investments in energy efficiency. By investing a fraction of Belo Monte’s estimated cost of US\$19 billion in energy efficiency and renewable sources such as biomass, wind, and solar, Brazil could avoid the need for new destructive dams in the Amazon. Truly renewable sources could account for 20% of the total electricity generated in the country by 2020,

paving the way to a truly sustainable energy future.

Threats to Brazil’s Forestry Code

This May, the lower house of Brazilian Congress voted overwhelming to dismantle the conservation laws mandating that 80% of agricultural lands in the Amazon remain forested. Driven by large landowners in Brazil’s soy and cattle industry, the proposed slashing of the Forestry Code’s ecological protections represents a clash between narrow profit-driven economic interests and those favoring socially and environmentally sustainable development. Opponents of the Code clearly have the upper hand: deforestation rates in the Brazilian Amazon have surged in recent months, in anticipation of the relaxed regulations and amnesty for past illegal logging.

Approval or refusal of changes to the Forestry Code now lies in the hands of the Brazilian Senate and ultimately with veto power of President Dilma Rousseff. The time is now to pressure the Brazilian government to abandon these devastat-

ing changes that endanger the Amazon’s forests and communities.

Murder and Intimidation of Forest Guardians

The Belo Monte Dam and the new Forest Code debates coincide with an alarming rise in murders of non-violent activists who have stood in the way of logging and other destructive activities. Threats to indigenous leaders and activists have also risen as the situation in the Amazon becomes increasingly chaotic. This wave of violence has also gone unpunished, illustrating the lawlessness and impunity rife throughout the Amazon while inviting continued acts of violence that are aimed at silencing forest guardians.

What Can We Do?

The threats to the Amazon and its people could not be more clear. The time is now to stand and participate in solidarity actions with Brazilian protestors calling on their government to immediately cancel the Belo Monte Dam, protect the Forestry Code, and defend forest guardians. See the websites below to find out how to get more involved.



www.xinguvivo.org.br



www.amazonwatch.org



www.internationalrivers.org