

The Amazon has become one of the main sources and transit points for criminal economies in Latin America



Non-state armed groups or crime syndicates are active in 70% of the municipalities investigated in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela.

Amazon UNDER WORLD



Gold mining and cocaine production **contribute to soil and water contamination** through the **discharge of chemicals** used in the processing of coca leaves and the extraction of gold in illegal mines. **4,500 illegal mining hotspots were identified** in the Amazon in 2020.

Crime dynamics are accelerating the destruction of the Amazon



The unchecked actions of criminal organizations pose an existential threat to the Amazon and Indigenous peoples.

Illegal miners and drug traffickers **invade Indigenous territories, pollute their livelihoods, recruit Indigenous children, and threaten leaders** who resist their activities. In 2022, **one in five killings of land and environmental defenders worldwide occurred in the Amazon.**

Indigenous peoples can be a central component in the fight against illegal activities in the Amazon if their own governance and territorial protection systems are supported.

1 Develop cross-border and cooperative security strategies

Environmental crimes don't respect political borders. In addition to international regulations, a regional security strategy is necessary for enhanced law enforcement cooperation, environmental security, and Amazon diplomacy.

3 Support Indigenous economies

Indigenous and community economies, based on the life plans of each community and "standing forest economies," which are economic activities and models that are centered around the sustainable use and preservation of forests, are needed as alternatives to illicit economies.

5 Address corruption and state complicity

Many government actions will yield no results unless corruption and deep-rooted state involvement with illicit economies are effectively addressed.

7 Increase transparency of illegal markets and supply chains

Establishing barriers to prevent Amazon commodities from accessing international markets has proven to be dramatically insufficient. Instead, closing policy loopholes and increasing transparency and traceability would go a long way toward limiting the reach of illegal markets.

Holistic policy recommendations that center Indigenous rights

2 Strengthen Indigenous land rights and control

To harness the full potential of Indigenous communities in curbing organized crime, public policies should be directed towards reinforcing the Indigenous peoples' strategies of territorial control and governance, which can help limit organized crime from expanding further and counter current criminal operations. Rather than portraying Indigenous peoples as mere victims, it is crucial to recognize them as political agents.

4 Protect those who stand up against organized crime

Organized crime will only be stopped if those who stand up against its activities, either through defending their territories, reporting in the media, denouncing from within governments, or working on political responses, are supported and protected. Existing protection programs tend to have insufficient resources and lack the necessary considerations for the Amazon context.

6 Cross-border communication on the financing of environmental crime

Given the blurred boundaries between legal and illegal economies, there must be increased judicial scrutiny of those financing environmental crimes. The sharing of intelligence, capabilities, and cross-border communication among Amazon governments and law enforcement agencies is of utmost importance.