On the afternoon of August 19, smoke and ash filled the sky over São Paulo, Brazil. The smoke was coming from the Amazon rainforest, hundreds of miles away. There, a record number of fires were raging, with little effort made to stop them. Some parts of the rainforest had been burning for several weeks.

The Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE) is Brazil’s space research center. It uses satellites to monitor fires. On August 25, the INPE reported that it had spotted 80,626 fires in Brazil so far this year. That’s a 78% increase over the same period in 2018. It’s the most fires the INPE has seen in Brazil since it started tracking them in 2013. Many are in the Amazon.

The fires sparked global outrage. Protesters gathered in cities around the world. They demanded leaders take action.

Global Crisis

The Amazon is the largest rain forest in the world. About 60% of it is in Brazil. The Amazon is home to millions of species of plants and animals and 30 million people. It is also important to the health of the planet. Its trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and replace it with oxygen. This helps slow climate change.
“Hundreds of thousands of acres of Amazon rainforest burning to the ground—that’s a real tragedy for the air we all breathe,” Moira Birss told TIME for Kids. She’s with Amazon Watch. It’s a conservation group based in California.

Experts believe the fires were set on purpose. In general, it’s against the law to start a fire in the rain forest. But it’s not uncommon. Farmers regularly do so. They clear land so they can plant crops and raise cattle for beef production.

Since 1978, some 289,000 square miles of the Amazon have been destroyed. That’s an area larger than the size of France. Deforestation peaked in the early 2000s. Then, in 2004, the Brazilian government began to crack down on illegal fires and logging. This greatly slowed tree loss in the region.

But the new president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, wants to reduce environmental protection. He took office in January 2019. Since then, Brazil has rolled back efforts to prevent deforestation.

“We’ve had eight months without any type of concrete action in defense of the Amazon,” says Rômulo Batista. He’s with Greenpeace Brazil.

**Taking Action**

Brazil has sent soldiers to battle the fires. It plans to send 44,000 troops to the area. On August 24, world leaders met for the annual Group of Seven (G7) summit. They agreed to a $20 million aid package to fight the blazes. But at press time, Bolsonaro would not accept the aid. On August 26, he tweeted that G7 leaders were treating Brazil as if it didn’t have the freedom to make its own decisions.

G7 leaders also discussed a long-term plan to prevent deforestation and plant new trees in the Amazon. “The lung of our whole Earth is affected,” German leader Angela Merkel said at the summit, “and so we must find common solutions.”
Fire Alarm: The Amazon Rainforest is on Fire.

Read the article “Fire Alarm” and using the reading, answer the following questions on a new page in your notebooks. Be sure to include the title of your article on that page!

1. According to the article how long have some parts of the rainforest been on fire?

2. What does the reading say is the number of fires in Brazil this year? How much of an increase is this from last year?

3. Read the section “Global Crisis”, use information from this section to explain the importance of the Amazon Rainforest.

4. Read the following passage from the article the answer the question below the passage:

   "Deforestation peaked in the Early 2000s. Then in 2004, the Brazilian government began to crack down on illegal fires and logging. This greatly slowed tree loss in the region."

   What does the word Deforestation mean?

5. What does the author of this article tell you the new president has done about illegal deforestation?

6. What is the author’s purpose in writing this article?

Read aloud available at https://www.timeforkids.com/g34/fire-alarm-amazon-rainforest-2/