



THE
Ricardo Salles
FAKEBOOK



**A GUIDE TO THE FALSEHOODS AND
RHETORICAL TRICKS OF BRAZIL'S
ENVIRONMENT MINISTER**

Top 3 Facts you did not know about Ricardo Salles:

1.

Told the Brazilian media he had a master's from Yale University.
That is a lie. He does not.

2.

He has been convicted for environmental fraud two weeks before taking office.

3.

Currently under investigation for illicit enrichment.

Our aim was to create a small compact document, that displayed a few of Ricardo Salles' inconsistencies. Turns out we needed 35 pages.

Please bear with us.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The global crisis caused by the worst fire season in the Brazilian Amazon in a decade has prompted the far-right government of Jair Bolsonaro into a propaganda counter-strike. The government has launched a communications campaign to calm down markets and investors and to avoid a widespread boycott of Brazilian products.

As part of that effort, Bolsonaro is sending his Environment minister, Ricardo Salles, into a tour of the United States and Europe, scheduled to start this week, as the world prepares to the UN General Assembly and to huge street protests for more ambition against the climate crisis, this Friday.

Salles will likely give government stakeholders and the international media the classic “we’re on top of this” pitch; he may present data showing how Brazil is a conservation champion, having most of its territory “preserved” as forests, and how Brazilian farmers undertake a massive conservation effort earning nothing in return.

Some of the data used by the government to back up those claims are distorted, some are cherry-picked and some are simply flawed. This booklet debunks the most frequent fallacies used by the minister and other members of the Bolsonaro administration.

In fact, the current Amazon destruction crisis is one of the government’s own making. Mr. Salles has dismantled the environmental governance that has been in place in Brazil since 1992, by changing the Ministry’s structure, shelving deforestation control plans, and grounding two federal environment agencies. Budget figures suggest there is no environmental policy being made in Brazil: the Ministry’s

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

budget appropriation this year has been less than US\$ 300,000.

On the other hand, government rhetoric has encouraged environmental criminals in the Amazon and elsewhere in Brazil – Salles has famously called illegal loggers “hard-working citizens who are bullied by environmental agencies”. As a result, deforestation alerts in the Amazon have grown by 50% this year.

The minister is a controversial figure. A lawyer with ties to the rural lobby, he was convicted for environmental fraud two weeks before taking office. He has been accused of changing the management plan of a protected area to benefit business. He is also under investigation for illicit enrichment.

Summary

INTRODUCTION	6
PRESS BRIEFING	9
FREQUENT FALLACIES	
Land Use	13
Agriculture	16
Climate change and the Paris agreement	19
Amazon	24
Governance	29

INTRODUCTION

On September 4th, 2019, the Brazilian Federal Public Prosecutor's Office issued an unprecedented recommendation: it told a Cabinet minister to stop lying and bullying his own team¹.

The recipient of the message was Ricardo Salles, the controversial lawyer that Brazil's far-right President Jair Bolsonaro picked as his Environment minister. The last member of the Cabinet to be appointed, Mr. Salles has nonetheless grown on the President for delivering with unrivalled efficiency on one of Bolsonaro's key campaign trail promises: to dismantle the environmental protections that made Brazil a leader in sustainable development and in the fight against climate change.

Salles was appointed to office with the support of the powerful rural lobby, to which he has ties and which is frequently at odds with the Environment ministry. Two weeks before becoming a minister, he was tried for and convicted of environmental fraud when he was state Secretary of the Environment in São Paulo State (prosecutors say he changed the management plan of a protected area to benefit big business). He is also being investigated for illicit enrichment (see biography in the annex). He denies any wrongdoing.

Under Salles' tenure, Brazil has seen the extinction of climate change governance, the scrapping of deforestation control plans, the freezing of the world's most successful REDD+ initiative and the shrinking of civil society participation in environmental policy -- which, by the way, has stalled: in 2019, the total budget appropriation for the Environment Ministry was unbelievably low: US\$ 300,000.

Under Salles, the federal agencies in charge of environ-

¹ <http://www.mpf.mp.br/pgr/documentos/Recomendaon42019aoM-MA.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

mental law enforcement (Ibama) and managing protected areas (ICMbio) were both grounded and their staff persecuted under false allegations. This led the Public Prosecutor's Office to urge the minister to "refrain from making public statements that, without proof, may put into question the work of Ibama and ICMbio agents".

The logical consequence of the minister's management was the return of runaway devastation in the Amazon: deforestation alerts spiked by 278% in July and around 223% in August², compared to the same period last year. The yearly trend points at a 50% increase over 2018 values, which would drive Brazil's emissions of carbon dioxide -- already at 2 billion tonnes -- further up. This would make it harder for the world's 7th biggest climate polluter to fulfill its domestic and international climate commitments.

Instead of doing something about it, Salles and Bolsonaro chose to shoot the messenger: the President fired the director of the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) and the Environment minister questioned INPE's data, saying, without presenting any evidence, that INPE's alerts system was flawed and insufficient for orienting environmental inspectors on the ground. The Public Prosecutor's Office urged Salles to substantiate his claims.

The rise in deforestation was followed by a rise in forest fires as soon as dry season kicked in. Even though 2019 was not an abnormally dry year, the number of fires exploded in August -- the highest in a decade-- and put the Amazon in the center of a global crisis. The Bolsonaro administration first denied the problem, then said NGOs were behind the fires, and finally launched a massive propaganda campaign to calm down investors and consumers by saying the government is on top of the problem. But this government *is* the problem.

It is all but fitting that Ricardo Salles has been assigned the task of greenwashing the Bolsonaro government

² <http://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/app/dashboard/alerts/legal/amazon/aggregated/>

³ http://plataforma.seeq.eco.br/total_emission

during his North American/European tour starting this week. He has a lot of practice doing it for himself. A gifted communicator, the minister is capable of amazing rhetorical tricks. He often controls his media exposure so he is very rarely interviewed by journalists who cover the environmental beat. Under pressure, he can make up data without even blushing. He has a talent for misleading journalists, the public and other stakeholders.

In this booklet, we will debunk some of Salles' most frequent fallacies about five issues: land use in Brazil, Brazilian agriculture, climate change, the Amazon and governance. Most of the information is referenced in the footnotes.

INTRODUCTION

PRESS BRIEFING

Brazilian environment minister visits the US and Europe

Dates & declared objectives of the trip

WHEN USA
SEP. 19TH - 24TH
EUROPE
SEP. 26TH - OCT. 4TH

WHERE USA and Europe
PARIS
SEP. 26TH - 29TH
BERLIN
SEP. 29TH - OCT. 3RD
LONDON
OCT. 3RD - 4TH

WHO Formal discussions between governments, companies, investors and the financial sector, national media, think tanks and business associations. In particular, it is understood that Minister Ricardo Salles will be meeting with representatives of the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), an organization which describes itself as questioning “global warming alarmism”, and “opposes energy-rationing policies, including the Paris Climate Treaty, Kyoto Protocol (...)” and regulation of greenhouse gas emissions⁴.

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/21/climate/epa-coal-pollution-deaths.html?module=inline>

WHY Minister Salles will be undertaking a series of meetings around key capitals to soothe governments, investors and companies after the global outcry on the Amazon Fires. In particular, his goal is to avoid any economic blocking or prejudices due to Bolsonaro's anti environment policies.

HOW MUCH Mr. Salles said⁵ that, if other countries want to contribute towards the preservation of the Amazon, they must send \$50bn to Brazil every year: "We have calculated here: if each hectare in the Amazon received \$100 per year, we would be talking about more than \$50bn per year, this is the volume of resources needed for us to really be able to say that the Amazon is being helped by the international community."

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-49363387>

AMAZON BUDGET AND GOVERNANCE DISMANTLED

The structural dismantling of the Ministry of the Environment started in the new government's first week through the Decree 9672⁶, issued on January 2, 2019, which also decommissioned the office in charge of deforestation prevention and control in the Amazon and Cerrado.

The Brazilian Forest Service was moved⁷ to the Ministry of Agriculture and is now headed by a member of the agribusiness-aligned Rural Caucus of the National Congress.

With the demise⁸ of *Secretaria de Mudança Climática e Florestas* [Climate Change and Forests Office] which was housed in the Ministry of the Environment, all policies carried out by it, such as the *Plano Nacional de Adaptação* [National Adaptation Plan], and deforestation prevention and control plans for the Amazon and Cerrado biomes were interrupted.

In April, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change and its Executive Group were extinguished⁹, together with the National REDD+ Commission, which act as a guarantor for resources coming from the Green Climate Fund awarded to Brazil last year. Consequently, funds have not been invested.

The administration cut the main environmental agency's budget by 24%¹⁰, and recently officials at this agency - Ibama¹¹ - stated that their mission has been hindered by budget cuts, staff reductions, political interference and environmental deregulation.

⁶ http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2019-2022/2019/decreto/D9672.htm

⁷ http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2019-2022/2019/Lei/L13844.htm

⁸ <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2019/01/itamara-ty-elimina-setor-de-mudanca-climatica-e-ambiente-fica-sob-soberania-nacional.shtml>

⁹ <https://www.oeco.org.br/reportagens/revogaco-extingue-orgaos-colegiados-do-ministerio-do-meio-ambiente/>

¹⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/28/world/americas/brazil-deforestation-amazon-bolsonaro.html>

¹¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/28/world/americas/brazil-deforestation-amazon-bolsonaro.html>

FIRES STILL RAGING

According¹² to Minister Salles, there has been a reduction in fires in the Amazon, with the exception¹³ of the state of Mato Grosso, thanks to the Law and Order Assurance (GLO) operations headed by the Armed Forces; however, he offered no official data to back his claim.

INPE's official data on fires provide a more pessimistic picture. The cumulative record of fire outbreaks in the Amazon biome as of September 19 (62,210) is 48% bigger than the same period last year (42,029)¹⁴.

DISMANTLING THE RULE OF LAW

Minister Salles also has been found guilty of manipulating environmental measures to benefit mining companies when he was state secretary of the Environment in São Paulo.

In 2019, Ibama – the environmental regulatory agency, has issued a third fewer fines than the previous year. In February, Environment Minister Ricardo Salles axed 21 of 27 state superintendents in a single day. The agency's budget and staff have been slashed - Ibama had a reduction of 24% of its budget this year - thus reducing enforcement capacity and turning a blind eye to illegal activity. It resulted in a reduction of 22% of surveillance operations predicted for 2019.

¹² <https://g1.globo.com/sp/sao-paulo/noticia/2019/09/09/salles-diz-que-tendencia-ja-e-de-controle-de-queimadas-na-amazonia.ghtml>

¹³ <https://g1.globo.com/sp/sao-paulo/noticia/2019/09/09/salles-diz-que-tendencia-ja-e-de-controle-de-queimadas-na-amazonia.ghtml>

¹⁴ <http://queimadas.dgi.inpe.br/queimadas/portal-static/situacao-atual/>

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Some of Salles' most frequent claims about five main issues with Brazilian environment and ambiental policies and the facts behind them

Land Use

CLAIM | *“Brazil is an example of environmental conservation for the world.”*

Ricardo Salles

FACT | In absolute terms, Brazil is the country that cuts down more forests than any other in the world¹⁵: more than 1.4 million hectares were clear-cut in the Amazon and in the Cerrado only in 2018, according to data from the National Institute for Space Research (663,400 hectares in the Cerrado and 753,600 hectares in the Amazon)¹⁶.

According to new data from the MapBiomas project, between 1985 and 2018, Brazil lost 89 million hectares of native vegetation, while agriculture (crops and pasture) expanded 86 million hectares. The lost area corresponds to 2.5 times the entire territory of Germany.

As for the country being an “example of conservation”, Columbia and Yale Universities’ Environmental Performance Index shows that Brazil, ranks 96th in forest conservation and 69th in the overall assessment of 180 countries, putting Brazil somewhere in the middle of most countries, far from the gold standard of environmental protection¹⁷.

CLAIM | *“Among the main agricultural countries, Brazil has the biggest extension of protected areas, which occupy 25% of its territory compared to 17.5% in Australia, 14% in China and 11.8% in the US. In addition,*

¹⁵ The Climate Observatory, April 28th 2019 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rM4SktDid2Q>

¹⁶ http://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/app/dashboard/deforestation/biomes/legal_amazon/rates

¹⁷ <https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/lupa/2019/07/05/meio-ambiente-salles-globonews/>

FREQUENT
FALLACIES

Land Use

protected areas in these countries include deserts and uninhabitable glaciers, while Brazil provides agricultural land to conservation”

Brazil's Foreign Office

FACT | Brazil is the most biodiverse country in the world, so it is natural to have many protected areas. However, the percentage of protected lands in Brazil is 30% of its territory when considering protected areas that allow for private property and economic uses - not so far above the global average of 25%. In addition, Brazil's protected areas are unevenly distributed: 90% of them are in the Amazon, a region that counts for less than 10% of agricultural production. Excluding the Amazon, less than 5% of Brazil is under protection¹⁸.

Even with many protected areas, Brazil has the world's third largest agricultural production area: 245 million hectares, second only to China and the United States and beating India, which produces more food than Brazil. This equals 1.4 times the agricultural area of all European countries combined. If we add to this the areas of natural fields of the Pantanal and Pampa biomes, which are used for grazing, this rises to 295 million hectares. The country also has the largest agricultural area per capita: 1.17 ha, compared to 1 ha in the US and 0.34 ha in China.

CLAIM | *“Brazil is the country that preserves more forests in the world than any other and has nothing to learn from those who have already cleared everything.”*

Ricardo Salles

FACT | Brazil is indeed a country with a lot of forests: 63% of its territory is covered by them. There are, however, at least 20 countries in the world that maintain a larger proportion of forests standing in their territory than in Brazil. Some examples, coming from World Bank data¹⁹:

Developing countries:

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rM4SktDid2Q>

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rM4SktDid2Q>

- » Congo (65%)
- » Guyana (84%)
- » Suriname (98%)

Developed countries:

- » Japan (68%)
- » Sweden (69%)
- » Finland (74%)

Besides, Europe has massively invested in reforestation. Today, nearly half of European territory is covered by forests – 97% coming from reforestation and restoration. Between 2009 and 2015, Europe has gained the equivalent of one Portugal in forests, while Brazil burned down five times that area²⁰.

CLAIM | *“Currently, about 66% of Brazil’s territory is dedicated to the protection and preservation of native vegetation”*

Brazil’s Foreign Office

FACT | About 66% of the Brazilian territory is covered with native vegetation. This is very, very different from being “dedicated to protection and preservation”. This claim takes into account family-produced areas such as quilombola land and settlements; areas in which multiple uses (including agriculture and mining) are allowed, such as Environmental Protection Areas (APAs); lands that are currently forested but can be legally deforested on private farms and vacant areas - public lands without formal destination, concentrated in the Amazon. Even if the approach was correct, data from the MapBiomas Project show that effective protection is far less: if we compute what has been kept preserved for the past 30 years, it is less than 50%²¹.

CLAIM | *“84% of the Amazon is preserved the way it was 500 years ago when the Portuguese arrived.”*

Ricardo Salles

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Land Use

²⁰ <https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7855381/>

²¹ <http://www.observatoriodoclima.eco.br/itamaraty-usa-dados-errados-para-defender-agro-brasileiro/>

FREQUENT
FALLACIESLand Use//
Agriculture

FACT | The Amazon biome has actually lost 19% of its original area – therefore, 81% of it is preserved, not 84%. The difference between the figure the minister presents and the official data equals nearly the territory of England.

According to the National Institute for Space Research, Inpe, the Amazon biome lost until 2018 an area of 788,352 km² out of its 4.2 million km².

How much percent of that remaining forest stays “the way the Portuguese found them” is a matter of debate, since degradation data is patchy. One study²² has estimated that the amount of disturbed forests in the Amazon, with several degrees of degradation, may have amounted to 1,255,100 until 2013, a figure that would put more than 40% of the forest under some human pressure.

Also, Amazon deforestation may be approaching a tipping point, in which the forest could lose its capability to recover and turn into an impoverished savanna. First models had showed that the tipping point was at about 40% deforestation. But according to a study released in 2018, the negative synergies between deforestation, climate change, and widespread use of fire indicate a tipping point for the Amazon system to flip to non-forest ecosystems in eastern, southern and central Amazonia at 20-25% deforestation²³.

Agriculture

CLAIM | “No public institution, professional category or public authority does more to protect the Brazilian biomes than Brazilian producers.”

Evaristo de Miranda

FACT | This claim is based on data by controversial scientist Evaristo de Miranda, who led Bolsonaro’s

²² <https://www.socioambiental.org/sites/blog.socioambiental.org/files/futuro-climatico-da-amazonia.pdf>

²³ <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/4/2/eaat2340>

FREQUENT
FALLACIES

Agriculture

transition team on the Environment Ministry. It is based on self-declared information provided by farmers and ranchers who are registered within the CAR (Rural Environmental Registry). A study published in 2018 in the journal *Environmental Conservation* noted that, in the state of Mato Grosso, 85% of the farmers declared having more forest on their property than what was actually measured²⁴.

Data from the MapBiomas Project, a multi-institutional collaboration, also showed that since 1985, 20% of the forests on private lands had been clear-cut, while in protected areas this figure was 0.5%²⁵.

CLAIM | *“Brazil is the only country in the world with legal requirements whereby farmers are responsible for the conservation of a large deal of the territory without receiving any compensation or tax exemption in return.”*

Brazil's Foreign Office

FACT | A 2011 study by Imazon and Proforest shows that at least 11 other countries have strict legal requirements for farmers to keep forests within their property²⁶. This requirement is known in Brazil as the “legal reserve”. Other countries, like South Africa, require that wetland and river vegetation be preserved at owner's expense to protect watersheds. Even though it is true that there is no federal law requiring payment for environmental services (PES), Brazil's new Forest Code establishes a scheme for trading forest quotas among farmers with forest deficits and farmers with forest surpluses. The law has never been enforced for a number of reasons, including pressure by the rural caucus to change it further so as to eliminate the legal reserve altogether. A bill proposal to kill the legal reserve has been presented by Jair Bolsonaro's son senator Flávio Bolsonaro²⁷.

Brazil's first federal PES scheme was designed under

²⁴ <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Do-Data-Support-Claims-That-Brazil-Leads-the-World-Vacchiano-Santos/e160b27c77aaa6e92ba6a6f31c35a89a79267ba2>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rM4SktDid2Q>

²⁶ <https://imazon.org.br/um-re-sumo-do-status-das-florestas-em-paises-selecionados/>

²⁷ <https://time.com/5661162/why-the-amazon-is-on-fire/>

the Green Climate Fund, whereby the country received US\$ 96.5 million²⁸. The contract was signed in March, but the money is still unused because Salles never appointed a committee to manage it in the Environmental Ministry and because he extinguished the National Redd+ Committee²⁹, which was in charge of overseeing the grant.

CLAIM | *“Over the past 40 years, production increased by 700% while land use increased only 30%. During the same period, grain production increased fivefold whereas the area taken up by crops remained practically stable. Therefore, the expansion of Brazilian agricultural production did not take place as a result of deforestation but because of increased productivity.”*

Foreign Office

FACT | That claim must be broken into several components. First, it is true that productivity outpaced deforestation in Brazilian grain production (the operative word is “grain”). According to Embrapa, Brazil’s federal agricultural research service, grain production jumped from 38 Mt in 1975 to 236 Mt, while crop area “only” doubled – from 37 million to 61 million hectares (so much for “practically stable”)³⁰.

As it happens, grain production is not the chief form of land use in Brazil: cattle ranching is. From the 30% of the territory that is used by agriculture, two-thirds are pastureland. Beef production takes up 173 million hectares, or about 20% of the Brazilian territory, according to MapBiomas. Cattle is still a highly inefficient industry: in the Amazon, 63% of all deforested area is occupied with pastures³¹ that on average support one head of cattle per hectare or less, according to Embrapa and Inpe.

That the expansion of production “did not take place as a result of deforestation” is a self-evident lie. According to MapBiomas, since 1985 Brazil’s biomes lost 89 million hectares of native cover while agriculture, ranching

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Agriculture

²⁸ <http://redd.mma.gov.br/pt/noticias-principais/1031-brasil-da-um-grande-passo-na-implementacao-de-redd-e-recebera-us-96-mil-hoes-do-gcf>

²⁹ <https://www.oeco.org.br/reportagens/stf-barra-parcialmente-decreto-de-bolsonaro-que-extingue-conselhos-no-pais/>

³⁰ <https://www.embrapa.br/visao/trajetoria-da-agricultura-brasileira>

³¹ <https://ainfo.cnptia.embrapa.br/digital/bitstream/item/152807/1/TerraClass.pdf>

included, gained 86 million hectares³². The Amazon has shrunk by 19%, while the Cerrado, the Central Brazilian savanna where most agriculture takes place, had 55% of its area transformed into agricultural soils in the last 50 years³³.

CLAIM | *“Brazil uses far, far fewer agrochemicals per hectare than several countries in Europe. Some European countries are making a fuss over this topic of agrochemicals when, per hectare, they use a much greater quantity of pesticides than in Brazil. And nobody says anything!”*

Ricardo Salles

FACT | According to a 2013 report from IBGE³⁴ (based on data collected by IBAMA), Brazil uses about 6.8 kg of active pesticides per hectare. That figure is greater than that of all European Union countries except Cyprus and Malta³⁵ (which use about 9 kg / ha each) for the same year. In addition, it is important to remember that the EU has banned some 600 pesticides over the last 25 years because of studies that revealed their potential harm. Of the nearly 400 agricultural chemicals permitted in the EU today, 25% are organic.

On Tuesday, September 17th, 63 more pesticides were authorized, totaling 353 new pesticides registered only in 2019. It is the highest number of the last decade³⁶.

Climate change and the Paris agreement

CLAIM | *“The Bolsonaro administration does not deny the existence of climate change...”*

FACT | The Bolsonaro administration is packed with flat-out deniers such as Foreign minister Ernesto Araújo³⁷, Bolsonaro's sons Eduardo and Carlos, and Bolsonaro's ideologue Olavo de Carvalho. References to climate

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Agriculture // Climate change and the Paris agreement

³² <http://www.observatoriodoclima.eco.br/brasil-perdeu-25-alemanhas-em-florestas-em-34-anos/>

³³ <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a5b1/4263d2a4912971fbfdcb-056892f54c14b44f.pdf>

³⁴ <https://sidra.ibge.gov.br/tabela/771#resultado>

³⁵ <http://news.agropages.com/News/NewsDetail--21442-e.htm>

³⁶ <https://www.greenpeace.org/brasil/blog/governo-bolsonaro-ataca-outra-vez-com-liberacao-de-mais-veneno/>

³⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-environment-araujo/brazil-foreign-minister-says-there-is-no-climate-change-catastrophe-idUSKC-N1VW2S2>

change have all but disappeared in Brazil's diplomatic communications, and not a single dispatch has been exchanged this year between Brasília and the Washington Embassy on the issue. Quite the contrary, Araújo has made the unprecedented move of sending a high-ranking diplomat to a conference of the climate change-denying Heartland Institute³⁸. In his recent visit to US, in September 12th, Araújo questioned Nasa satellite data on fires monitoring and once again cast doubt on global warming, saying that various countries are using climate change alarmism to achieve political goals³⁹.

Salles' own views are slightly more nuanced. The minister never denied that the Earth is warming, but has repeatedly questioned the human influence in the process, said climate change was "a secondary issue", a matter "of academic debate", and "debate for 500 years from now". Under strong pressure in August, at the Latin American and Caribbean Climate Week, Salles said climate change is "an evolving issue" in the government. A token of such "evolution" may be the fact that Salles is scheduled to meet the denialist Competitive Enterprise Institute and its director Myron Ebell in New York on the eve of the global climate strike of September 20th.⁴⁰

CLAIM | *"...More than that, the government stayed in the Paris Agreement and kept all its policies in place"*

Ricardo Salles

FACT | All of the climate change governance at the federal level was dismantled in the Brazilian government over the last nine months. In week one of the new administration, the climate change and sustainable development departments were scrapped from the Foreign Office structure⁴¹. The National Climate Change and Forests secretariat was likewise extinguished at the Environment Ministry (Salles told the press it was a promotion rather than an extinction, since he would appoint

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Climate change and the Paris agreement

³⁸ <https://jamilchade.blogosfera.uol.com.br/2019/07/31/leia-o-telegrama-confidencial-do-itamaraty-sobre-mudancas-climaticas/>

³⁹ <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2019/09/nos-eua-araujo-diz-que-satelite-nao-diferencia-fogueira-de-acampamento-de-incendio.shtml>

⁴⁰ <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2019/09/ministro-do-meio-ambiente-vai-se-reunir-com-negacionistas-do-aquecimento-global-em-washington.shtml>

⁴¹ <http://www.observatoriodoclima.eco.br/extincao-da-area-de-clima-itamaraty-e-medida-ideologica-e-antipatriotica/>

a special advisor to the minister on climate⁴², which has never happened). The Inter-ministerial Climate Change Committee (CIM) and its Executive Group (GEx), the highest instances of federal climate change governance, were also extinguished, and so was the National Redd+ Committee.

The end of the National Climate Change Secretariat has frozen all the policies that were planned and implemented by the office. Chief among them are the plans for deforestation prevention and control in the Amazon (PPCDAm) and the Cerrado (PPCerrado) – both are the centerpieces of Brazil's NDC, since deforestation makes up 46% of Brazil's greenhouse-gas emissions.

The decade-old national Climate Fund (Fundo Clima), which funded mitigation and adaptation projects, is also in a limbo⁴³: no plan for using the resources was presented in 2019⁴⁴ and not a single penny from existing contracts was spent since April.⁴⁵ A new analysis of the Ministry's budget shows that it has spent zero real funds on fighting climate change in 2019⁴⁶.

CLAIM | *“Europe will not comply with the Paris Agreement, they already said they will not comply and the whole world has not said anything. And Brazil, which is fulfilling its commitments, seems to be the great villain.”*

Ricardo Salles

FACT | The Paris Agreement goals (known as NDCs) will only begin to be implemented next year. Several European countries have signaled that they will increase the ambition of NDCs by 2030, in line with a resolution from this year's European Parliament⁴⁷ calling for more ambition already in 2020. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden and France already have laws establishing target of zeroing its net emissions between 2030 and 2050⁴⁸. Salles confuses the Paris Agreement

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Climate change and the Paris agreement

⁴² <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2019/01/ministerio-do-meio-ambiente-vai-enxugar-area-de-mudancas-climaticas.shtml>

⁴³ <https://g1.globo.com/natureza/noticia/2019/05/03/governo-de-scumpre-prazo-e-trava-86percent-do-orcamento-para-enfrentar-a-mudanca-climatica.ghtml>

⁴⁴ <https://www.mma.gov.br/clima/fundo-nacional-sobre-mudanca-do-clima/plano-anual-de-aplicacao-de-recursos>

⁴⁵ https://www.bndes.gov.br/wps/wcm/connect/site/b00fa4db-77fb-457d-b771-4e424c7cd94e/Fluxo+Financeiro+FNMC_04+2019.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=m19LJ4-

⁴⁶ <https://sustentabilidade.estadao.com.br/blogs/ambiente-se/gastos-com-acoes-de-gestao-ambiental-do-pais-despenca/>

⁴⁷ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0217_EN.html

⁴⁸ <https://www.climatechange-news.com/2019/06/14/countries-net-zero-climate-goal/>

with pre-2020 targets, which Germany announced it would not meet.

Likewise, the government has said that Brazil is meeting its Paris Agreement commitments, such as the adoption of biofuels, renewable energy and forest regeneration. Even if they could be accounted for NDC compliance (they cannot, as targets need to be additional and are only valid from 2020), sectoral commitments are not part of Brazil's NDC, which is the reduction of 37% in 2025 emissions compared to 2005 and says nothing about forest regeneration or biofuels. In fact, Brazil to this day has not even submitted a NDC implementation plan and hardly will reach its commitment to deforestation at 3,925km² next year.

CLAIM | *“In the period leading up to 2020, Brazil achieved its Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) goals by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation in the Amazon and the Cerrado.”*

Foreign Office

FACT | When the target was announced, before the Copenhagen climate summit in 2009, the main goal was to cut down deforestation rates by 80% in the Amazon. When Brazil submitted its target to the UN, the 80% reduction was “translated” in net tons of CO₂ (564 million). The government has been claiming that the target has been achieved through an accounting trick: it has factored in the carbon supposedly “captured” by private-owned forests in properties registered in the Rural Environmental Registry, CAR – which, as we have seen, are self-declared, thus useless for accounting without verification. The fact remains that the current level of deforestation (7,500 km², veering towards a big increase in 2019) is twice as big as the 2020 target mandates. The target for the Cerrado had been slashed on its inception by then-minister Dilma Rousseff. Since it was calculat-

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Climate change and the Paris agreement

ed without proper monitoring of the biome, it had been achieved even before its announcement.

CLAIM | *“Brazil has 400 million tons of CO2 reductions measured under the Kyoto Protocol. Only 150 million tons were effectively monetized, so from 2005 onwards there are 250 million tons, or \$ 2.5 billion, that Brazil had already priced, certified, recognized and they have not paid.”*

Ricardo Salles

FACT | Salles refers to potential CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) credits that would not have been purchased, despite having received achieved reductions. However, the Kyoto Protocol does not impose any obligation to purchase these emission reductions.

To meet its reduction target, the European Union has set up a system of emissions trading, the EU-ETS (European Union - Emissions Trading System). For about eight years, CDM credits could be traded there. The transactions were made exclusively between private entities: the project owners, the final credit buyers and a whole complex system of intermediation. The carbon credit sales contracts contained a long list of clauses justifying their termination. In 2012, reflecting the 2008-09 recession, the EU-ETS decided to no longer accept CDM credits from China, India and Brazil. This was one of the main reasons for the breach of purchase contracts. In this sense, no company that purchases credits has debts to Brazilian companies.

AMAZON

CLAIM | *“This year’s fires are not out of the last 20 years average.”*

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Climate change and the Paris agreement

FREQUENT
FALLACIES

Amazon

FACT | Using the historical rate of the last 20 years, the government includes in the account years when there were peaks of fire outbreaks, such as 2004, 2007 and 2010. Importantly, between 2005 and 2012, with the implementation of effective policies to combat deforestation, there were 80% reduction in deforestation rate in the Amazon. Even though this downward trend has slowed and deforestation has grown again in recent years, what we are seeing this year is an explosion in deforestation and burning driven by anti-environmental policies. From January to August, the number of fire outbreaks in the Amazon grew by 111%, compared to the same period last year. It is the highest index of the last nine years.

CLAIM | *“The action taken by the President sending the Army to the Amazon to fight the fires is unprecedented”*

FACT | In fact, a massive deployment of troops was done in 2005 by then-President Lula on the wake of the murder of American nun Dorothy Stang. Operation Pacajá, as it was called, sent 2,000 Army men to the Amazon to fight land-related violence and environmental crime⁴⁹. As a result, deforestation dropped in 2005 compared to 2004.

So, the current situation is not unprecedented and also is not a solution to deal with deforestation. In fact, what we are seeing the government do is promising to open indigenous lands and unit conservation to ranching farmers and to mining activities, as well as jeopardizing the surveillance agencies.

CLAIM | *“This year was warmer and drier than the previous years, so we started from another base for the fires.”*

Ricardo Salles

FREQUENT
FALLACIES

Amazon

FACT | The opposite is true. As shown by a technical memo published by the Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM), this year, the number of consecutive days without rain was lower than last year. The decisive factor has instead been burning and deforestation⁵⁰, which grew 50% in 2019 according to data from INPE. The fires' growth trajectory is also consistent with that seen in fires that began in recently-deforested areas. A second memo from IPAM⁵¹ demonstrated that the largest share of fire outbreaks (33%) are on private property, suggesting that farmers are actively burning to increase their productive area.

There is no such thing as a "natural fire" in a rainforest. As the very name suggests this is a damp ecosystem, where wildfires only happen every 500 to 1,000 years. The Amazon forest did not co-evolve with fire, which is the case in Brazil's central savanna, the Cerrado.

There are four kinds of fire in the Amazon: in deforested areas, where ignition happens either by accident or as a result of the intentional burning of a pasture or cropland; and in forested areas, where fire happens under exceptional conditions - as a result of strong El Niños or climate change or when a felled forest is burned to make way for agriculture. The latter seems to be the case this year.

The increase of fires this year is indeed a result of an orchestrated movement motivated to a large extent by Bolsonaro's speeches and dismantling of environmental policies and agencies. The existence this year of the so-called "Fire Day", in which farmers and land-grabbers in Pará planned a coordinated day of fires on 10 August is a clear evidence⁵². Although the plans had been reported by the media, the Federal government did not take any preventive measure and investigations are happening in a lengthy process.

⁵⁰ <https://ipam.org.br/bibliotecas/nota-tecnica-amazonia-em-chamas/>

⁵¹ <https://ipam.org.br/bibliotecas/amazonia-em-chamas-onde-esta-o-fogo/>

⁵² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/26/brazil-amazon-fire-day-warning>

FREQUENT
FALLACIES

Amazon

CLAIM | *“Our proposal for the Amazon Fund had the agreement of Finance ministers from both Norway and Germany. But the Environment ministers opposed, thus the deadlock”*

Ricardo Salles

FACT | No, until now, the Finance Ministries of donor countries never agreed with Salles’ proposal of removing civil society from the Amazon Fund and controlling its governing bodies. Also, the government does not give any assurances that the fund will be kept to be used to protect the forest.

CLAIM | *“When you say that society was there... what you mean is the NGOs were there. NGOs that are on COFA [the Amazon Fund Guidance Committee] that benefit from half the Amazon Fund’s resources, ergo, a conflict of interests.”*

FACT | The COFA, which shut down on June 28th, did not approve projects but set guidelines for them (hence the “guidance” in the name). Approvals went through BNDES, the Brazilian Development Bank, meaning they passed through the federal government. If the presence of NGOs on this committee generated a conflict of interests, the same would apply to state governments, which had nine times as many representatives on the COFA than NGOs did.

It is simply false to assert that NGOs held considerable weight on the committee. Of its 24 members, eight were from the federal government and nine from state governments. Civil society had six representatives: one indigenous, one from the scientific community, two from industry, one from family farms and just one from environmental organizations. Finally, 60% of the resources of the Amazon Fund go to public projects at the federal, state and local levels, mainly to enforce the Forest Code and to strengthen the surveillance in the Amazon. Only 38% support projects

were carried out by civil society.

CLAIM | *“We want the resources they say they donate to Brazil to be effectively donated to Brazil and not under outside control in this way (...) If you make it so that the funds cannot be reallocated, then it isn't a donation, you're offering a grant with certain conditions.”*

FACT | The minister is using sophistry to distort the meaning of the word “donation.” When someone donates money to an institution, there is always the expectation that the institution will do something in return, or will work in a common proposal. The Amazon Fund, likewise, is not a blank check; it is a donation conditioned on the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation. Donors will consider any departure from this end to be a violation of the Fund's purpose, as Norway's Minister for the Environment, Ola Elvestuen, has made clear⁵³. It is different from what Bolsonaro have already implied, saying that one of the conditions imposed by the Fund were the creation of Indigenous Lands, which is not true.

CLAIM | *“Protecting the Amazon for the whole world has a cost, which we estimate to be US\$ 50 billion a year. Deforestation rates have dropped by 72% from 2004 levels and rich countries never paid Brazil for it.”*

FACT | Only, they did. The Amazon Fund, which is frozen right now because Salles has refused to work collectively with NGOs, has a total stipend of R\$ 3.4 billion (US\$ 850 million at today's exchange rate) to pay Brazil for results achieved at reducing deforestation. Today it has R\$ 479 million “under analysis”⁵⁴ that could be liberated if the government so allowed. It was the world's biggest REDD+ program. Brazil is also the recipient of a US\$ 96.4 million grant from the Green Climate Fund, which is thus far unused due to the lack of people to manage the funds in government.

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Amazon

⁵³ <http://www.observatoriodoclima.eco.br/enfraquecimento-fundo-amazonia-nao-e-uma-opcao-diz-ministro-noruegues/>

⁵⁴ http://www.fundoamazonia.gov.br/export/sites/default/pt/galleries/documentos/informe-de-carteira/2019_06_Informe-da-Carteira-Fundo-Amazonia.pdf

FREQUENT
FALLACIES

Amazon

CLAIM | *“Brazil’s Indigenous population has 13% of the national territory and is 1% (sic) of the population. There’s no prejudice at all, it’s 1 to 13. On the contrary, the greatest amount of land per capita that any group can claim of our national territory is indigenous land.”*

FACT | Indigenous lands are a constitutional right of these populations to maintain their culture and guarantee their existence. They are more than ever necessary as there is a war against the Indigenous in Brazil. Data from CIMI (the Council of Indigenous Missions) show that in 2017 alone, the last year for which there is systematic information, there were 110 murders of indigenous people, 128 suicides (mostly land-related), 792 cases of childhood death and 96 cases of invasion and embezzlement, an increase of 62% over the previous year⁵⁵. Preliminary data from CIMI indicate that there were 14 invasions of indigenous land in 2019 so far.

The Indians do not own territory; indigenous lands belong to the state, with exclusive use granted to the Indians. Who “owns” that 13% of the national territory, is in fact the government.

The assertion that Indians would have “the greatest amount of land per capita” does not hold up either. Brazil’s 900 thousand Indians occupy 117 million hectares (in fact, 14% of the country, not 13%). But latifundios (the largest type of rural properties), which make up only 6% of the country’s rural properties, hold 182 million hectares, or 21% of the national territory, according to the Atlas of Brazilian Livestock and Agriculture, IMAFLORA and ESALQ-USP.

CLAIM | *“The Amazon has 20 million people whose well-being must never be sacrificed for the sake of conservation. Environmentalists don’t see the needs of the people who are impoverished and starving. The forest needs capitalist solutions: land tenure regular-*

⁵⁵ <https://cimi.org.br/2018/09/relatorio-cimi-violencia-contra-os-povos-indigenas-no-brasil-tem-aumento-sistematico-e-continuo/>

ization, ecological-economic zoning of the territory, private investment and the development of a bioeconomy. Command-and-control alone won't manage to bring deforestation under check."

FACT | Most of the Amazonian population lives in already deforested areas. The small part of these are the indigenous, quilombolas, and riverside populations.

That said, during the period in which deforestation declined, Brazil and the Amazon region saw their greatest GDP growth and their most significant reduction in poverty levels. Things were no different in livestock and agriculture: the value of Brazil's agricultural sector grew by 75%. Meat and soy production in the Amazon grew⁵⁶ as well during the period in which forest deforestation fell by 80% between 2004 and 2012⁵⁷. Deforestation actually increases poverty, because it is illegal, often resorts to slave-like labor, and is prey to the "boom-bust" effect, that is, it raises economic standards at first and then, as the natural resource is exhausted, economic depression sits in⁵⁸.

Of course these facts were not lost to the Brazilian government. That is why the plan for deforestation prevention and control (PPCDAm) had a component of land tenure regularization and another component of sustainable use of the forest⁵⁹ – precisely in order to develop the "capitalist solutions" Mr. Salles talks about. PPCDAm currently lies in some drawer in the ministry.

It is true that command-and-control will not alone solve the whole problem. But, without them, the deforestation increases and situation deteriorate. And that's what's happening now.

Governance

CLAIM | *"There has been no dismantling of any structure of this ministry - none. We received a situation that*

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Amazon // Governance

⁵⁶ <http://www.observatoriodoclima.eco.br/seis-graficos-mostram-porque-floresta-no-chao-e-sinonimo-de-retrocesso/>

⁵⁷ <http://www.observatoriodoclima.eco.br/seis-graficos-mostram-porque-floresta-no-chao-e-sinonimo-de-retrocesso/>

⁵⁸ https://amazon.org.br/PDFamazon/Portugues/estado_da_amazonia/o-avanco-da-fronteira-na-amazonia-do-boom-ao.pdf

⁵⁹ <https://www.mma.gov.br/informma/item/616-pre-ven%C3%A7%C3%A3o-e-controle-do-desmatamento-na-amaz%C3%B4nia>

was rather dismantled. No staff, no budget, abandoned buildings, depleted fleets, 50% unfilled staff positions.”

FACT | In May, eight out of nine living ex-ministers of the Environment denounced that the Bolsonaro administration was promoting the “dismantling” of the federal environmental governance that has been in place since 1992. Mr. Salles⁶⁰ denies the accusation, saying for instance that no legislation has been changed - which is true. But evidence abounds that a crippling of the system, fulfilling Bolsonaro’s campaign promises, is actually in place:

» Decree 9.672, published in January 2nd, extinguishes Ministry’s Secretariat responsible for climate change and deforestation control policies. The decree also transfers the National Water Agency to the Regional Development Ministry and the Brazilian Forestry Service to the Agriculture ministry.

» In March, a gag rule was imposed on Ibama (the national Environment agency) and ICMBio (the national parks service). Neither agency is allowed to communicate directly with the press anymore.

» In April, a Presidential decree extinguished two dozen councils and committees where civil society could participate in policy-making, such as the Amazon Fund committees, the National Redd+ Committee and the Climate Change Fund committee. The inter-ministerial committee for climate change (CIM) and its Executive Group (GEx) were also extinguished.

» The National Environmental Council, Conama, Brazil’s most important advisory committee for environmental policy, which fixes standards on air pollution and environmental licensing, was shrunk from 100 to 23 members. The number of representatives from the federal government increased from 29% to 40% of its members. NGO members were picked in a bingo⁶¹. We’re serious.

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Governance

⁶⁰ http://www.observatoriodo-clima.eco.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/comunicado-ex-ministros-final-revisado_en.pdf

⁶¹ <https://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/governo-faz-sort-eio-com-bolinhas-globos-para-escolher-novos-membros-do-conama-23813780>

» The Amazon Fund, which had been running for ten years, was suspended by the minister, in a move to cut funding for NGOs and give money to landowners⁶² and eventually land-grabbers⁶³. Salles said NGOs were involved in wrongdoing, a claim never backed up by any evidence.

» Salles fired 21 out of 27 regional heads of Ibama and did not hire new officials. In the Amazonian states, to date, only one regional office (out of nine) has its chief appointed, which has resulted in paralysis of operations.

» Ibama was grounded. The number of fines applied to crimes of deforestation has dropped by 29%⁶⁴, the lowest in ten years. The number of operations in the Amazon fell by 22%⁶⁵ this year. Ibama's special force wasn't mobilized to fight crime in the Amazon until late August, when the Amazon fires were already out of control.

» The budgetary performance of the ministry shows that environmental policymaking is stalled in Brazil. In 2019, the whole ministry had a budget appropriation of a mere R\$ 1.2 million⁶⁶ -- a 96% drop from 2018 figures. No money at all was given to climate change or protected areas, only R\$ 19,000 went to deforestation control and even Mr. Salles' top priority, the urban environmental agenda, only saw a fraction of the authorized budget being spent on programs such as waste management and marine pollution. For helping municipalities develop environmental control strategies, the budget appropriation has been less than a hundred US dollars.

» Ibama and ICMBio have also been subject to severe budget cuts. Ibama's inspections had a 15% budget cut this year. The budget for fighting wildfires was cut by 29%. ICMBio lost 29% of its money to manage protected areas and 21% of its budget for inspections. Both agencies will run out of money before the end of the year⁶⁷.

FREQUENT FALLACIES

Governance

⁶² <http://climainfo.org.br/2019/05/27/salles-quer-usar-fundo-amazonia-para-in-denizar-desapropriacoes/>

⁶³ <http://www.observatoriodo-clima.eco.br/en/improbo-ricardo-salles-quer-tirar-fundo-amazonia-para-dar-grileiros/>

⁶⁴ <https://g1.globo.com/natureza/noticia/2019/08/24/queima-das-disparam-mas-multas-do-ibama-despencam-sob-bolsonaro.ghtml>

⁶⁵ <https://www.poder360.com.br/brasil/ibama-nao-realizou-22-das-acoes-de-fiscalizacao-planejadas-para-2019/>

⁶⁶ <https://sustentabilidade.estadao.com.br/blogs/ambiente-se/gastos-com-acoes-de-gestao-ambiental-do-pais-despencam/>

⁶⁷ https://sustentabilidade.estadao.com.br/blogs/ambiente-se/principais-orgaos-ambientais-ibama-e-icmbio-podem-ficar-sem-verba-antes-do-fim-do-ano/?utm_source=estadao:whatsapp&utm_medium=link

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