

Brazil endangers global climate and health

Carlos José Saldanha Machado

Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil.

Rodrigo Machado Vilani

Departamento de Turismo e Patrimônio, Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil.

Philip M. Fearnside

Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazônia, Manaus, AM, Brazil.

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Brazil's National Congress has recently overturned presidential vetoes and passed provisional measures into law that violate Brazil's Constitution and international treaties by prioritizing financial gain over environmental conservation. Brazil's Supreme Federal Court should reaffirm that the Brazilian state cannot reinterpret the constitution to legitimize the destruction of critical ecosystems.

On 27 November 2025, Brazil's Congress overturned 52 of the 63 line-item vetoes made by the president to the so-called "devastation bill" (Federal Law No. 15.190, 8 August 2025, formerly bill PLNo. 2159/2021) (1), which creates an environmental self-licensing mechanism. In doing so, the Congress has converted the licensing that was originally intended to protect human and nonhuman lives into a tool facilitating high-impact projects. The abbreviated licensing effectively eliminates Indigenous and Quilombola peoples from decision-making processes.

On 2 and 3 December 2025, the National Congress converted Provisional Measure 1308/2025 into law (Federal Law No. 15.300, 22 December 2025), creating a special environmental license that forces approval within 1 year of major projects that a political committee classifies as "strategic" (2). These special licenses are intended to accelerate large-scale projects in the Amazon, such as oil drilling in the mouth of the Amazon River (3), the BR-319 (Manaus–Porto Velho) highway (4), and activities related to mining (5). The law facilitates the transformation of the Amazon into a logistical corridor subordinated to private interests, ignoring that collapse of the region's ecosystem services—including climate regulation, hydrological cycles, and biodiversity stability—jeopardizes the country's economic and social viability (6).

Gutting Brazil's environmental licensing system also disregards the risk of pandemics (7). By expanding the mineral frontier and opening new areas to invasion by

landgrabbers and squatters, the Brazilian state increases the interface between human populations and wildlife pathogens. The Congress's decisions will intensify classic mechanisms of zoonotic emergence, such as habitat loss, ecological stress on fauna, invasive species circulation, forced animal displacement, and increased human flows in areas of high biodiversity (8, 9).

These decisions violate Brazil's Constitution, which enshrines the right of Indigenous peoples to be consulted regarding water, energy, and mining projects in their territories (article 231) and the right of all citizens to an ecologically balanced environment (article 225) (10). Moreover, in 2019 Brazil approved Decree No. 10,088, which makes the country a signatory to the International Labour Organization Convention 169, a binding treaty securing the rights of Indigenous peoples. In December 2025, political parties, the National Association of Municipal Environmental Agencies, and the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Federal Court arguing the unconstitutionality of Laws 15.190/2025 and 15.300/2025 (11). Brazil's Supreme Federal Court should overrule the Congress's decisions.

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