



Written by [James Murphy](#) on November 30, 2019

Brazil's Bolsonaro Puts Blame for Some Amazon Fires on Hollywood's Leonardo DiCaprio

Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, who has been under world-wide attack for allegedly allowing portions of the Amazon rainforest to burn out of control throughout the late Summer and Autumn months of this year, is fighting back against one of his main detractors. Bolsonaro is blaming actor Leonardo DiCaprio (shown) for making donations to non-profit groups who may have been guilty for starting some of those fires.



Speaking to supporters on Friday, Bolsonaro called out the Titanic star. "DiCaprio is a cool guy, isn't he? Giving money to set the Amazon on fire."

DiCaprio has been an outspoken proponent for "saving" the Amazon. In August, his environmental fund Earth Alliance pledged \$5 million to protect the Amazon from fires.

But is he really helping if, as Bolsonaro claims, he's funding NGOs that may have started some of the fires?

Bolsonaro bases his accusation on the fact that DiCaprio made large donations to non-profit groups who may have been responsible for setting some of the fires. The president's comments followed a police raid on two nonprofit groups in the Brazilian state of Pará.

Four volunteer firefighters from Pará were arrested on charges that they started fires in the region in an attempt to boost sagging donations to environmental NGOs. The firefighters have been released from custody.

This year's fire season in the Amazon is the worst since 2013 but nowhere near the environmental disaster that hundreds of media outlets — as well as DiCaprio himself — were protesting about earlier in the year.

While this year's fire count is up more than 80 percent from last year, 2018 was a relatively light fire year in the Amazon. Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE) reports that more than 80,000 separate fires were burning in the Amazon at one point this year. In the Brazilian portion of the rainforest, over 40,000 fires were burning. To date, the 2019 fires have burned over 2,200,000 acres.

But the multiple claims that this year's spate of fires is "unprecedented" is patently false. The 2019 fire season is not the worst ever. It's not even the worst this decade.

Bolsonaro has been [claiming for a while now](#) that environmentalist NGOs have been deliberately setting the fires in the Amazon in order to embarrass his government, which has cut down on some deforestation regulations in the country. But his claims have lacked evidence of any kind.

Does Bolsonaro's rebuke of DiCaprio reveal that the police raids have secured new evidence? We'll have to wait and see.



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But there's no question that many politicians and environmentalists such as DiCaprio have been spreading misinformation about this year's fires in the rainforest.

DiCaprio was one of the main voices expressing an apocalyptic tone in connection with the 2019 Amazon fire season. In August, DiCaprio [posted on Instagram](#), "The lungs of the Earth are in flames. The Brazilian Amazon — home to one million indigenous people and 3 million species — has been burning for more than two weeks straight."

French President Emmanuel Macron joined in the hysteria on [Twitter](#). "Our house is burning. Literally. The Amazon rain forest — the lungs which produce 20% of our planet's oxygen — is on fire."

Various news outlets including ABC, CNN and *Newsweek* jumped on the claim that the Amazon produces 20 percent of the Earth's oxygen. Trouble was, the information was completely false.

Dan Nepstad, a scientist with the Earth Innovation Institute has been debunking the "lungs of the Earth" claim since at least 2005, when he told the *Los Angeles Times*, "It's not the lungs of the world. It's probably burning up more oxygen now than it's producing."

This year, Nepstad [told Forbes](#) that the "lungs of the Earth" claim was "bull****."

"There's no science behind that. The Amazon produces a lot of oxygen, but it uses the same amount of oxygen through respiration, so it's a wash."

So, despite what Macron and DiCaprio seem to be inferring, the Earth's oxygen supply is in no danger from the fires in the Amazon. In actuality, the rain forest produces about 6 percent of the Earth's oxygen which, as Nepstad points out, it uses itself.

Bolsonaro, thus far at least, has not released any hard evidence on his claims that NGOs are guilty of starting any fires. Perhaps DiCaprio was just the highest profile detractor Bolsonaro could think of and he attacked the actor in an effort to fight back against criticism of his handling of Brazil's fire season.

But Brazil's president is an ally of Donald Trump and the U.S. president's allies are high on the hit-list of globalists. Telling lies about the Amazon's importance to the ecosystem doesn't seem to bother such people. Why would setting a few fires?

Photo of Leonardo DiCaprio:U.S. Department of State

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