

# Climate crisis is greatest ever threat to human rights, UN warns

**Rights chief Michelle Bachelet highlights role in civil wars  
'The world has never seen a threat to human rights of this scope'**

*Agence France-Presse in Geneva*

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Michelle Bachelet said the Amazon fires 'may have catastrophic impact on humanity as a whole, but their worst effects are suffered by the women, men and children who live in these areas.' Photograph: Salvatore Di Nolfi/EPA

**Climate change** is not only having a devastating impact on the environments we live in, but also on respect for human rights globally, the UN has warned.

The UN rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, cited the civil wars sparked by a warming planet and the plight of indigenous people in an Amazon ravaged by wildfires and rampant deforestation.

She also denounced **attacks on environmental activists**, particularly in Latin America, and the **abuse aimed at high-profile figures** such as the teenage campaigner Greta Thunberg.

“The world has never seen a threat to human rights of this scope,” she told the UN human rights council in Geneva.

“The economies of all nations, the institutional, political, social and cultural fabric of every state, and the rights of all your people, and future generations, will be impacted” by climate change, she warned.

The 42nd session of the council opened with a minute of silence for the victims of Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas, **where at least 44 have been killed and thousands of homes reduced to rubble.**

“The storm accelerated with unprecedented speed over an ocean warmed by climate shifts, becoming one of the strongest Atlantic hurricanes ever to hit land,” Bachelet said.

Low-lying small island states like the Bahamas, which are heavily affected by climate change, are quickly seeing rights to water, sanitation, health, food, work and adequate housing, she warned. She called for international action to mitigate the impact there.

The UN high commissioner for human rights also denounced the **“drastic acceleration of deforestation of the Amazon.**

“The fires currently raging across the rainforest may have catastrophic impact on humanity as a whole, but their worst effects are suffered by the women, men and children who live in these areas,” she said.

She urged authorities in Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil to “ensure the implementation of longstanding environmental policies ... thus preventing future tragedies”.

Bachelet’s comments risk further angering the Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, who last week accused her of meddling in his country’s affairs after she criticised the deteriorating rights situation there.

The UN rights chief also highlighted the impact climate change is having on insecurity around the world. She cited a UN estimate that 40% of civil wars over the past six decades have been linked to environmental degradation.

In the Sahel region of Africa for instance, degradation of arable land “is intensifying competition for already scarce resources”, she said. This in turn exacerbates ethnic tensions, and fuels violence and political instability, she

added.

Bachelet lamented that those sounding the alarm over the devastating impacts of climate change are often attacked.

UN experts, she said, had “noted attacks on environmental human rights defenders in virtually every region, particularly in Latin America”.

“I am disheartened by this violence, and also by the verbal attacks on young activists such as Greta Thunberg and others, who galvanise support for prevention of the harm their generation may bear,” Bachelet said.

“The demands made by environmental defenders and activists are compelling, and we should respect, protect and fulfil their rights.”

# U.N. rights boss urges Brazil to preserve Amazon from mining

1 MIN READ



FILE PHOTO: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet holds a news conference at Centro Cultural Espana in downtown Mexico City, Mexico April 9, 2019 REUTERS/Carlos Jasso

GENEVA (Reuters) - U.N. human rights chief Michele Bachelet called on Monday for an investigation into the murder of an indigenous leader in Brazil last week and urged the Bolsonaro government to reconsider its proposal to open up more of the Amazon area to mining.

In a statement, Bachelet said that the murder of Emyra Waiapi in Amapa was a “disturbing symptom of the growing

problem of encroachment on indigenous land - especially forests - by miners, loggers and farmers in Brazil”.

“I urge the Government of Brazil to act decisively to halt the invasion of indigenous territories and ensure the peaceful exercise of their collective rights to their land,” she said, adding that deforestation exacerbates climate change.

Reporting by Stephanie Nebehay, Editing by William Maclean  
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# Brazil's Bolsonaro says no evidence indigenous leader murdered

3 MIN READ

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on Monday said there was no evidence an indigenous chief, whose death was decried by the U.N. commissioner for human rights, was killed by wildcat miners said to have invaded protected tribal lands.

FILE PHOTO: Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro speaks during a ceremony to launch the new worker fund stimulus at the Planalto Palace in Brasilia, Brazil July 24, 2019. REUTERS/Adriano Machado

The far-right Bolsonaro has repeatedly criticized the existence of protected lands, saying there are too many of them and that they prevent Brazil from profiting from its natural resources.

Emyra Wajapi, a leader of the Wajapi tribe who lives on a reservation near Brazil's northwestern border with French Guiana, was found dead last week.

The state indigenous affairs agency Funai,

headed by a Bolsonaro appointee, said on Monday the most recent police report on Wajapi's death showed no evidence of the "presence of an armed group" on the reservation at the time.

But an internal memo from Funai's office in Amapá state seen by Reuters said 10 to 15 armed men had invaded Wajapi land and occupied a village last week. The memo sent on Saturday evening said it was not clear yet how Wajapi died.

Brazil's federal police are investigating the death and allegations by tribe members that their lands were invaded by wildcat miners.

"There is no solid evidence as of now that that Indian was murdered," Bolsonaro told reporters in Brasilia.

United Nations High Commissioner for

Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, a former president of Chile, called for an investigation, describing Wajapi's death "a disturbing symptom of the growing problem of encroachment on indigenous land – especially forests – by miners, loggers and farmers in Brazil."

In a statement, Bachelet also urged Bolsonaro to reconsider his government's proposal to open up more of the Amazon rainforest area to mining. Under Bolsonaro, deforestation of the Amazon has accelerated here, according to a state-run agency.

Bolsonaro has called the deforestation numbers false. here

"Brazil lives from commodities," Bolsonaro said on Monday. "What do we have here in addition to commodities? Do people not remember this? If the

[commodities] business fails, it will be a disaster.”

Bolsonaro said he was planning to regulate and legalize wildcat miners, who critics say heavily pollute rivers and clear forests in their search for gold and other minerals. Bolsonaro said he wanted regulations to allow indigenous people to mine their reservations.

The Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) rights group called on Bolsonaro to defend the constitutional rights of Brazil’s native people to their tribal lands.

“Aggressive hate speeches by Bolsonaro and members of his government are encouraging the invasion and pillage of land and violence against indigenous peoples,” CIMI said in a statement.

Reporting by Lissandra Paraguassu and Anthony Boadle in Brasilia,  
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