



REGARDING DEFORESTATION AND FOREST FIRES IN BOLIVIA AND THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS



Report to the Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

Regarding deforestation and forest fires in Bolivia and the violation of human and indigenous peoples' rights

September 23, 2019*

Introduction

In recent weeks, the Amazon – particularly on the Brazilian side – has captured the attention of the international community. In Bolivia, fire has devastated nearly four million hectares in the Amazon basin and adjacent ecosystems such as the Cerrado and the Pantanal.

Unlike his Brazilian counterpart Jair Bolsonaro, President Evo Morales has made particular mention his government's efforts to win the battle against the fires. At the same time, amid the growing general discontent in Bolivia and the clamor of affected populations, authorities have avoided talking about the policies and regulations that have prompted this environmental disaster, and have instead pointed to the effects of climate change characteristic of the capitalist system as the principal cause.

The serious degradation of our forests and the consequent impact on the human rights of the Bolivian population – and particularly of the indigenous peoples – is the result of the policies and regulations promoted by the Government of the Bolivian State. But beyond the climate conditions typical of the dry season (and enhanced by the phenomenon of local and global climate change that affects the region), the fires in eastern Bolivia are a consequence of decisions previously made regarding the expansion of the agricultural and livestock frontier.

*Report prepared by Fátima Monasterio. It counted on the contribution of Leonardo Tamburini, Daniel Espinoza and the National Collective of Rights Defense Lawyers. Translation was provided by Jennifer Garro.

The facts

On August 15, the municipality of Roboré in the department of Santa Cruz declared an emergency. About 40 days ago eastern Bolivia began to burn. In the department of Santa Cruz, the Chiquitania (which is part of the Amazon basin and home to the [best preserved tropical dry forest on the planet](#)), the Cerrado and the Pantanal are the most affected areas.

According to the [latest data reported](#) by the Friends of Nature Foundation (FAN: Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza) based on Sentinel-2, MODIS and VIRSS satellite images, the national area affected by controlled burning and wildfires has reached 4.1 million hectares, of which nearly 1.4 million hectares correspond to forested areas (*see Figure 1*).

As of September 15, approximately 3 million hectares were reported burned in the Department of Santa Cruz, which represents 74.5% of the total national affected area. The department with the second largest area of burned land is Beni, with an estimated 879,441 hectares.

The most affected municipalities in Santa Cruz are San Matías, San Ignacio de Velasco, Charagua, Puerto Suarez, San José de Chiquitos, Concepción, San Rafael, Roboré and Carmen Rivero Torrez, together representing 94% of the burned area within the department. [In the Department of Beni, the most affected municipalities are Baures, San Borja, Riberalta and San Ramón.](#)

The effects of the fires have also [reached 27 indigenous territories and 20 areas protected](#) at the national and sub-national levels, according to a report by the Center for Legal Studies and Social Research – CEJIS.

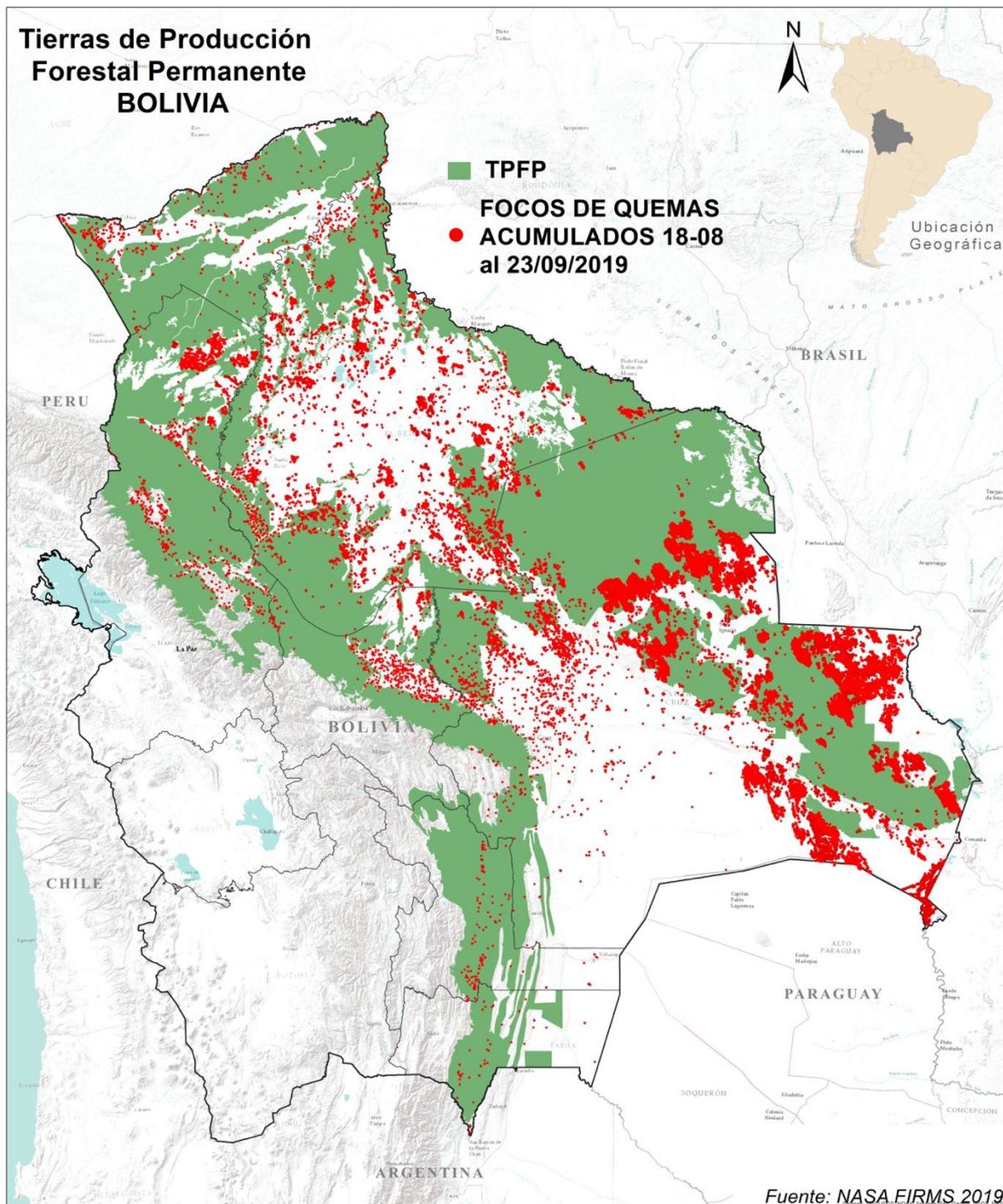
Reports of the total number of fire outbreaks from August 18 to September 23 indicate that the disastrous situation persists, as [affirmed by authorities from the Santa Cruz Emergency Operations Center](#) on Monday, September 21, as well as several Bolivian civil society organizations during the self-convened [First National Summit for the Defense of Forests](#) on September 24.

The indigenous peoples most affected by the fires in Bolivia (*see Figure 2*) are the Chiquitanos, Ayoreos, Guarayos, Cayubaba, Baures, Sirionó and Araona (*see Table 1*). It should be noted that some communities are especially vulnerable to wildfires due to their small populations or voluntary isolation, as in the case of the Ayoreos of Ñembi Guasu, one of the areas most affected by fire.

Using data of fire outbreaks registered by the Planning Center for Autonomous Territories, the progress of the fires and the extent of damage to forests and indigenous territories can be observed (*see Comparative Images 1*).

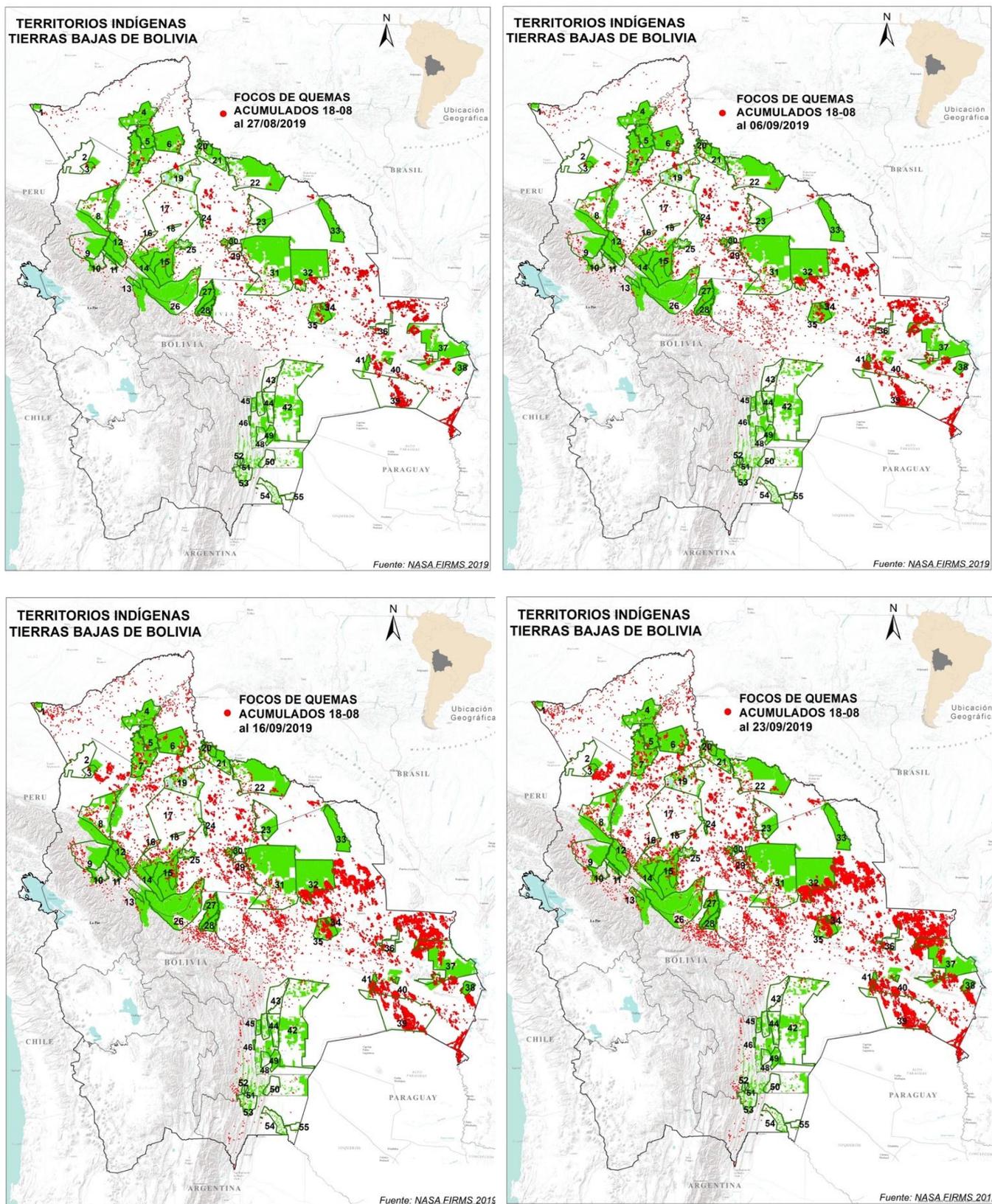
Coinciding with indigenous homelands, some nationally protected areas have also been severely affected. According to FAN data, as of September 15 the burned area in San Matías had reached 568,609 ha and Otuquis registered an area of 294,345 ha affected by fires. At the subnational level, the protected area of Ñembi Guasu showed 381,567 ha of affected lands (*see Figure 2*).

Figure 1. Total fire outbreak sites between August 18 and September 23, 2019 in Permanent Production Forest Lands Bolivia



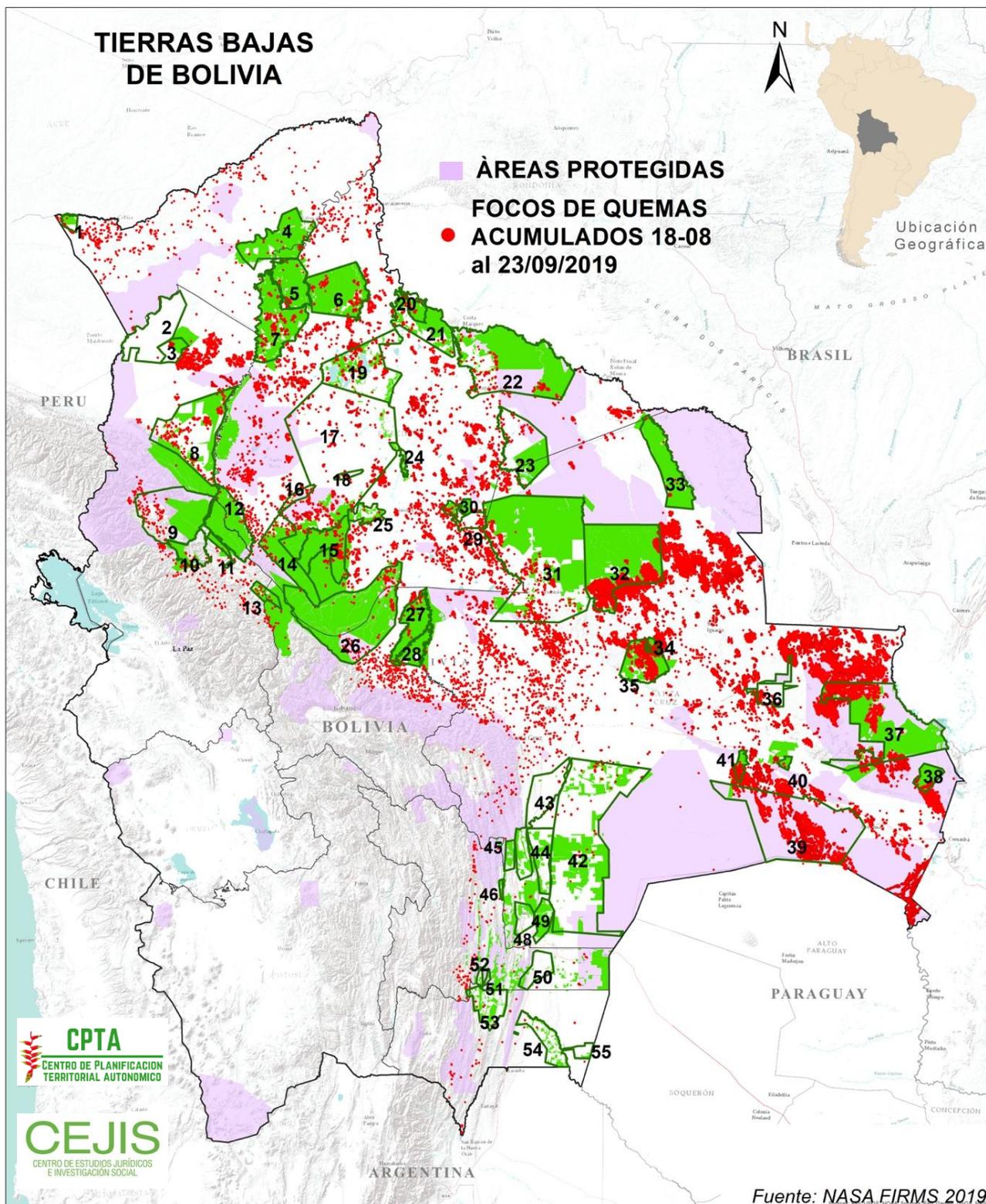
Source: Planning Center for Autonomous Territories, CEJIS, 2019.

Comparative Image 1. Progression of the total fire outbreak sites in the ten-day interval between August 18 and September 23, 2019



Source: Planning Center for Autonomous Territories, CEJIS 2019

Figure 2. Total fire outbreak sites between August 18 and September 23, 2019 in Indigenous Territories and Protected Areas of Bolivia



Source: Planning Center for Autonomous Territories, CEJIS, 2019.

Figure 2 Leyend

No.	Territorio	No.	Territorio	No.	Territorio
1	Yaminahua	11	Moseten	21	Joaquiniano
2	Takana II*	12	Pilon Lajas	22	Itonama
3	Araona	13	Moseten	23	Baures
4	Multiétnico II - TIM I	14	TICH I (Chiman)	24	Canichana
5	Takana Cabineño	15	TIM (Multiétnico)	25	Moxeño Ignaciano (TIMI)
6	Chacobo/Pacahuara	16	TICH II (Chiman)	26	TIPNIS (Isiboro Secure)
7	Cabineño	17	Movima II	27	Yuracaré
8	Takana I	18	Movima I	28	Yuqui
9	Lecos Apolo	19	Cayubaba	29	Bella Selva
10	Lecos Larecaja	20	More	30	TIS (Siriono)
31	Guarayos	41	Santa Teresita - Cimi	51	Avatiri Ingre
32	Monteverde	42	Isoso	52	Avatiri Huacareta
33	Bajo Paragua	43	Takovo Mora	53	Itikaguasu
34	Zapoco	44	Charagua Norte	54	Weenhayek
35	Lomerio	45	Kaaguasu	55	Tapiete
36	Esecatato Auna Kith *	46	Iupaguasu	* Demandas territoriales que aún no han sido atendidas por el	
37	Pantanal	47	Itikaraparirenda		
38	Rincon del Tigre	48	Kaami		
39	Ñembi Guasu *	49	Charagua Sur		
40	Tobite	50	Machareti		

Table 1 Territories and Indigenous People affected by forest fires in Bolivia 2019

Indigenous People	Territory	Approximate Population	Number of communities	Department
Chiquitano	Monte Verde	3060	140	Santa Cruz
	Lomerío	6481	29	
	Pantanal	6387	29	
	Esecatato Auna Kiixh	2795	19	
	Zapocó	222	1	
Guarayo	Guarayo	14496	27	
Ayoreo	Rincón del Tigre	384	1	
	Santa Teresita Cimi	157	1	
	No contactados Ñembi Guasu	-	-	
Cayubaba	Cayubaba	3084	21	Beni
Baures	Baures	632	7	
Sirionó	Sirionó	406	2	
Araona	Araona	100	8	
Total aproximado		38204	285	

Source: Planning Center for Autonomous Territories, CEJIS, 2019, using data extracted from the Sociopolitical Atlas of Indigenous Territories of Lowland Bolivia.

Causes

Deforestation and climate change

While climate change must be understood as a threat to the integrity of the Amazon basin and to tropical forests in general, local land use policies are critical to managing this threat. Numerous studies indicate that deforestation in tropical ecosystems has serious and far-reaching environmental consequences.

Deforestation and consequent changes in land use exacerbate existing ecological risks associated with global changes in temperature and precipitation patterns.

In particular, an appreciable lengthening of the dry season [has been observed](#) over the past 40 years in tropical forest ecosystems, resulting in precipitation extremes beyond those normally expected for the region. Drought conditions (such as those currently experienced in the departments of Santa Cruz and Beni) further complicate matters, as authorized slash-and-burn operations easily escape control, causing unanticipated and irreversible damage in previously intact areas.

At this point a system of positive feedback [can be observed](#): scarce seasonal rainfall (resulting from previous deforestation) becomes lower still, as smoke from controlled slash-and-burn further inhibiting precipitation. And while in the past, minor fires would be extinguished by nightly increases in humidity, drought conditions impede this process, and fires easily spread.

In summary, changes in land use often entail an increase in the use of slash-and-burn agricultural techniques whose fires are difficult to control, and which result in conditions that encourage an increase in the frequency of fires (and other extreme weather events) and exacerbate the damage that such events cause.

Deforestation and public policies in Bolivia

According to [official data](#), the cumulative historical deforestation in Bolivia until 2000 totalled 3.6 million hectares. However, *between the years 2000 and 2017 the deforested area at the national level has doubled*, exceeding 7 million hectares, meaning that during this period of time 52% more land has been deforested than in the entire history of the country.

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), there are three economic activities that contribute most to the process of forest destruction: large-scale mechanized agriculture, small-scale agriculture and livestock expansion into forested areas. Similarly, the Forest and Land Authority (ABT: Autoridad de Bosques y Tierras) has recognized that *deforestation in Bolivia has increased in recent decades, mainly due to the continuous expansion of the agricultural and livestock frontier*,

*land allocation (...), and the new economic policies being implemented to guarantee the country's food security.*¹

The [Economic and Social Development Plan 2016 - 2020](#) (PDES: Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social) establishes as one of its goals the expansion of cultivated land from 3.5 to 4.7 million hectares by 2020. Likewise, one of the conceptual pillars in the 2025 Patriotic Agenda related to productive sovereignty affirms that, for the same year, agricultural production will have increased and the total population of cattle will have at least tripled. Although this objective may refer to cultivated lands, *it has been applied as an extension of the agricultural and livestock frontier, directly threatening forests and the environment.*

It is clear that the objectives of the public policies promoted by the Government of the Bolivian State include the conversion of forests to other types of productive uses. Thus, there is institutional and political protection for the degradation of areas that, according to the Bolivian Constitution and other national laws (as we will see later) are subject to protective restrictions.

The ABT report is revealing, noting that *national planning for 2020 is driving the modification of changes in forest cover in favor of crop fields and livestock pastures, and consequently the clearing of lands with forest cover.*²

Thus, the principal national forest authority emphasizes that *the trend of increasing legal deforestation has been due to the implementation of public policies established in the Economic and Social Development Plan 2016-2020 (PDES) and the Patriotic Agenda (2025) with respect to the progressive increase from 3.5 million hectares to 4.7 million productive hectares that guarantee national food security and sovereignty.* In 2017 the ABT reported on the need to increase the legally cleared/prepared area in order to reach an annual rate of 200,000 hectares and thus comply with the provisions of the PDES.

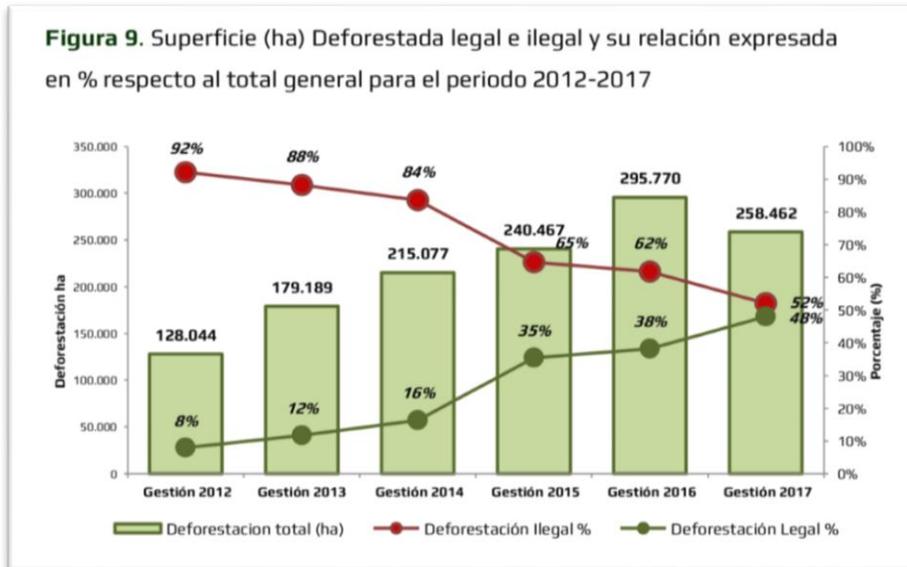
At a [public hearing in April of 2019](#), the ABT noted that deforestation had increased by 200% as of 2015.

It is important to note that deforestation in Bolivia has increased under the framework of legalization, as will be discussed later. The image below (*see Figure 3*) clearly demonstrates the increase in deforestation levels and the growth of legal deforestation, particularly since 2015, which coincides with the enactment of Law 741 on the “Authorization of Land Clearing up to 20 Hectares.”

¹ [Deforestación en Bolivia. Período 2016-2017, ABT y Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua Bolivia](#)

² [Ibidem.](#)

Illustration 3 Relationship between legal and illegal deforestation in Bolivia 2012-2017



Source: Deforestation in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Period 2016-2017.

According to the same source, the department with the highest rate of deforestation in recent years has been Santa Cruz, followed by the department of Beni. **The municipalities with the highest levels of deforestation at the national level are the same as the municipalities most affected by forest fires specified previously.**

Regulations that permit the expansion of the agricultural frontier and deforestation by controlled burning

The Government of the State of Bolivia has systematically approved a set of regulations aimed at making its economic policy viable, thus facilitating clearing and burning in areas of Permanent Production Forest Lands (TPFP; Tierras de Producción Forestal Permanente) in order to expand the agricultural and livestock frontier. It should be noted that the Bolivian Forestry Law has assigned the TFPF designation to forests whose characteristics warrant this category of use (Article 15). At the same time, Bolivia's Political Constitution establishes their *strategic character* (article 386) and *obligates the Bolivian State to guarantee their conservation and sustainable use* (article 387) in light of their rich biodiversity. The State must also safeguard their ecological balance, respecting the limits of capacity for use by considering their biophysical, socio-economic, cultural and political-institutional characteristics (Article 380). In short, Article 342 stipulates that "[i]t is the duty of the State and the population to conserve, protect and sustainably utilize natural resources and biodiversity, as well as to maintain the equilibrium of the environment."

1. Law 337 Assistance for Food Production and the Restitution of Forests (December 19, 2013) and its extensions (laws 502/14, 739/15 and 952/17)

In line with preceding paragraphs, the Forestry Law establishes as a forest crime the “*logging or burning carried out on lands with forest cover suitable for other uses without the authorization of the competent authority or without complying with the relevant regulations [...]*” which constitute “[...] *acts of destruction and deterioration of State assets and national wealth as classified in Article 223 of the Criminal Code.*”

With the enactment of Law 337, those who had cleared or burned forested areas between 1996 and 2011 were exempted from these penalties, and were instead subject to the payment of a fine and to enrollment in a program for food production and restitution of forests.

This law, which legalizes the conversion of forested land for agricultural uses, also contradicts Law 3545 for Community Renewal, which establishes that “*illegal clearing is contrary to sustainable land use and does not constitute fulfillment of the Socio-Economic Function*” (article 2 paragraph XI).

[At that time \(2013\), the National Institute for Agricultural and Forestry Innovation \(INIAF; Instituto Nacional de Innovación Agropecuaria y Forestal\) and the Ministry of Rural Development and Land](#) estimated that 5.5 million hectares had been illegally deforested in Bolivia, of which **66% belonged to the agricultural/livestock and agro-industrial sectors, 17% to foreign settlers**, 12% to campesinos and 5% to indigenous peoples. This means that Law 337 has primarily benefited the agricultural and agro-industrial sectors in Bolivia, and not the indigenous or campesino populations.

The deadline for offenders to subscribe to the “*forgiveness law*” was extended several times through the following amendments to Law 337: Law 502 (February 26, 2014), Law 739 (September 30, 2015) and Law 952 (May 23, 2017).

With this “clean slate” policy, a culture of impunity was created that **has facilitated the current environmental disaster by encouraging indiscriminate deforestation.**

2. Law 741 Authorization of forest clearing of up to 20 hectares for small properties and community/collective properties for agricultural and livestock activities (September 29, 2015)

This regulation permits the use of slash-and-burn operations on up to 20 hectares per family in areas of Permanent Production Forest Lands (TPFP), in express contravention of the previously-cited Articles 380, 386 and 387 of the Bolivian Constitution.

According to the new Law 741, these authorizations do not entail payment for wood harvested from these operations, and it is not necessary to prepare a Land Management Plans (POP: Planes de Ordenamiento Predial) prior to clearing. It is important to mention here that, according to forestry regulations, in order to acquire a Forest-Clearing Plan, a

Land Management Plan is required, in which the zoning of the property is determined according to its unique capacities and suitability of use, and which is equivalent to a declaration of environmental impact.

According to the ABT, in agreement with the official discourse on food security and sovereignty of campesino and indigenous producers, *legal deforestation in TFPF areas complies with the implementation of Law 741 of 2015 (...) which benefits small properties, campesino communities, indigenous and collective lands by allowing clearing in this type of land if necessary, within the framework of food security.*³

According to these authorities, between 2016 and 2017 alone, more than half a million hectares were deforested, of which 40% were classified as TFPF. In a public hearing in 2018, the ABT reported that **as of 2015 deforestation has increased by 200% as a result of Law 337 and the increased flexibility of the approval system.** The authorities moreover mentioned **that 63% of those clearing forests in Bolivia belong to the private sector.**

3. Supreme Decree 3467 (January 24, 2018), which modifies agricultural regulations

This decree authorizes the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA: Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria) to distribute government land as collective units, without taking into account their ecological and geographical realities as mandated by the Constitution, and without the use of specific human settlement programs, as stipulated by the current agrarian regulation.

Without a doubt, the lack of institutionalism and transparency in information provided by INRA is alarming and does not allow for a higher level of analysis. It is worth mentioning that the ABT itself, when pointing out the causes of deforestation in Bolivia, noted that *the policy of lowland occupation has resulted in a process of expansion of the agricultural frontier to the detriment of forests.*⁴

4. Law 1098 (September 15, 2018) and Supreme Decree 3874 (April 16, 2019)

On one hand, these regulations establish the regulatory framework that allows for the production, storage, transport, marketing and mixing of Vegetable-Origin Additives, for the purpose of gradually replacing the import of inputs, additives and diesel, with the stated objective of protecting food and energy sovereignty.

³ [Deforestación en Bolivia](#) Período 2016-2017, ABT y Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua Bolivia.

⁴ *Ibidem.*

However, with the enactment of this law and the approval of the Supreme Decree 3874/19 (which authorizes the National Biosafety Committee to establish abbreviated procedures for the evaluation of the HB4 and Intacta soybean varieties destined for the production of Vegetable-Origin Additives – Biodiesel), the legal framework for indiscriminate deforestation has been established. This type of seed is intended to be resistant to drought conditions typical of the Chiquitano Dry Forest region, for example.

The plan to increase monoculture production of cane to 320 thousand hectares has been welcomed by the agro-industrial sector of eastern Bolivia.

For its part, [civil society organizations have signed a formal letter](#) to Evo Morales, [reminding him](#) of the precautionary principle, the legal prohibitions established in both the Bolivian Constitution and the Mother Earth Framework Law, as well as the [impacts](#) that these measures could have on the health of Bolivians.

The impact of this measure on forests [is greater deforestation](#). The images below ([see Comparative Images 2](#)) show the advancement of the agricultural frontier for the production of ethanol from sugarcane.

Comparative Image 2a. San Buena Ventura Sugarmill, Bolivian Amazon; second semester of 2016.



Source: Planet, CPTA.

Comparative Image 2b. San Buena Ventura Sugarmill, Bolivian Amazon; first semester of 2017.



Source: Planet, CPTA.

5. Law 1171 Rational Use and Management of Burning

Enacted recently on April 25 of 2019, this law aims to regularize the unauthorized use of fire for clearing lands through the application of [extremely small fines](#). The sanctions applied are between 2 and 6 bolivianos (less than \$1 USD) per hectare burned and between 47 bolivianos (less than \$7 USD) and 230 bolivianos (equivalent to \$33 USD) as a fixed fine depending on the type of property. This regulation, which is tantamount to the promotion of slash-and-burn practices, [is employed mainly by livestock businesses and the agricultural sector](#). It's interesting to note that the ABT, making use of the powers granted to it by this Supreme Decree in its transitory provisions, has even [publicized the exemption from interest penalties on unpaid fines](#) until October 25, 2019.

6. Supreme Decree 3973 (July 09, 2019)

With this regulation, the Government of the State of Bolivia has modified Article 5 of Supreme Decree 26075 (2001) that restricted the clearing in forest lands to the department of Santa Cruz. The purpose of this modification is *to extend the agricultural frontier in the department of Beni in TFPF areas* from 13 thousand hectares to approximately 1.2 million hectares. This new regulation coincides with the goals set by the [Livestock Development Plan 2020-2030, presented by cattle ranchers to President Evo Morales](#) in January, which entails progressing from *13 million hectares of land designated for livestock to 20 million hectares*, in order to fulfill their beef export commitments to China. At this pace, all the conditions necessary for another environmental disaster such as the one we are currently experiencing will be met.

Experts, rights activists, [social movements and civil society in general have identified these regulations as a cause of fires](#) in the Amazon, Chiquitania and Chaco regions of Bolivia (see pronouncements in the Annex). For their part, [representatives of the agribusiness and agricultural sectors have initially rejected the general call to repeal these laws](#).

- Weakening forest control and supervision bodies

State bodies for the control and supervision of forests and protected areas have been weakened. This was acknowledged by the ABT in its latest management report, and it is common knowledge that the National Service for Protected Areas (SERNAP: Servicio Nacional de Áreas Protegidas) is experiencing a serious economic institutional crisis. The institutions responsible for the administration and control of forests have been gradually losing ground in state budgets. It's for this reason that the current forest fire emergency finds them in a dire situation in terms of conservation, infrastructure, equipment, and personnel for control and supervision.

Economics, , social, cultural and environmental rights violated or at risk

Forest fires in eastern Bolivia have seriously affected the environment and in consequence the integrity of the human habitat, which is essential for the full enjoyment and exercise of the rights of indigenous peoples and of Bolivian inhabitants in general. It should also be noted that, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), smoke from forest fires can have negative effects on the health of large populations living adjacent to fire sites.

As established in Article 11 of the Protocol of San Salvador and Article 26 of the American Convention on Human Rights (along with other international instruments signed and ratified by the Plurinational State of Bolivia), as well as Advisory Opinion OC-23/17 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (November 15, 2017), environmental rights are fundamental to the exercise of other human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights.

It is crucial to note that the right to water is one of the principal rights that have been put at risk as a result of the forest fires. This situation is aggravated by prolonged drought, and the little rainfall that extinguishes smaller fires carries ash to the few sources of water remaining in the affected areas.

Unarguably, people's rights to health, education, food and work have also been violated, since the disaster has impeded the necessary conditions for their exercise. According to the [latest report from the Ministry of Health](#), as of September 22 at least 17, 215 cases requiring medical attention as a result of the forest fires had been reported, with the most reported illnesses being conjunctivitis and respiratory disease.

[Cases of houses being destroyed by fire](#) and of the forced displacement of their inhabitants have also been reported. [Furthermore, the fires have taken the lives of 5 volunteer firefighters who had been helping with efforts to deal with the tragedy.](#)

The Rights of Indigenous People

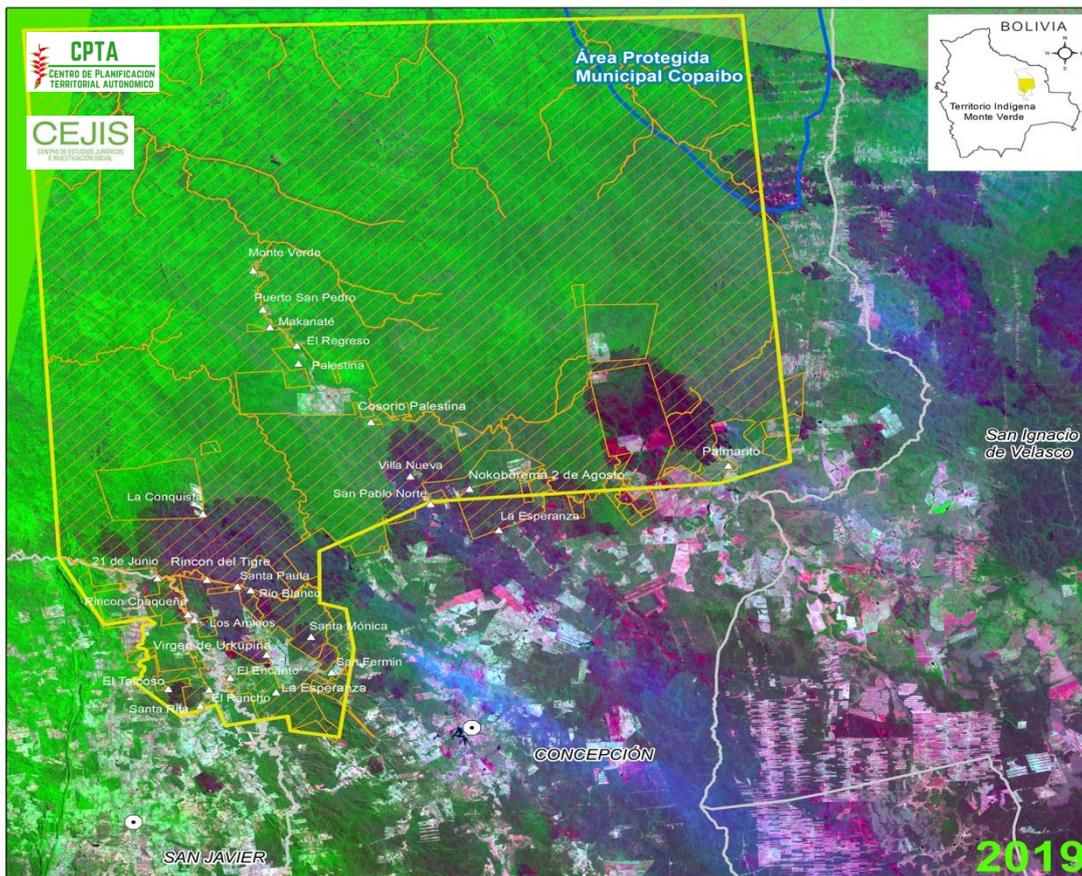
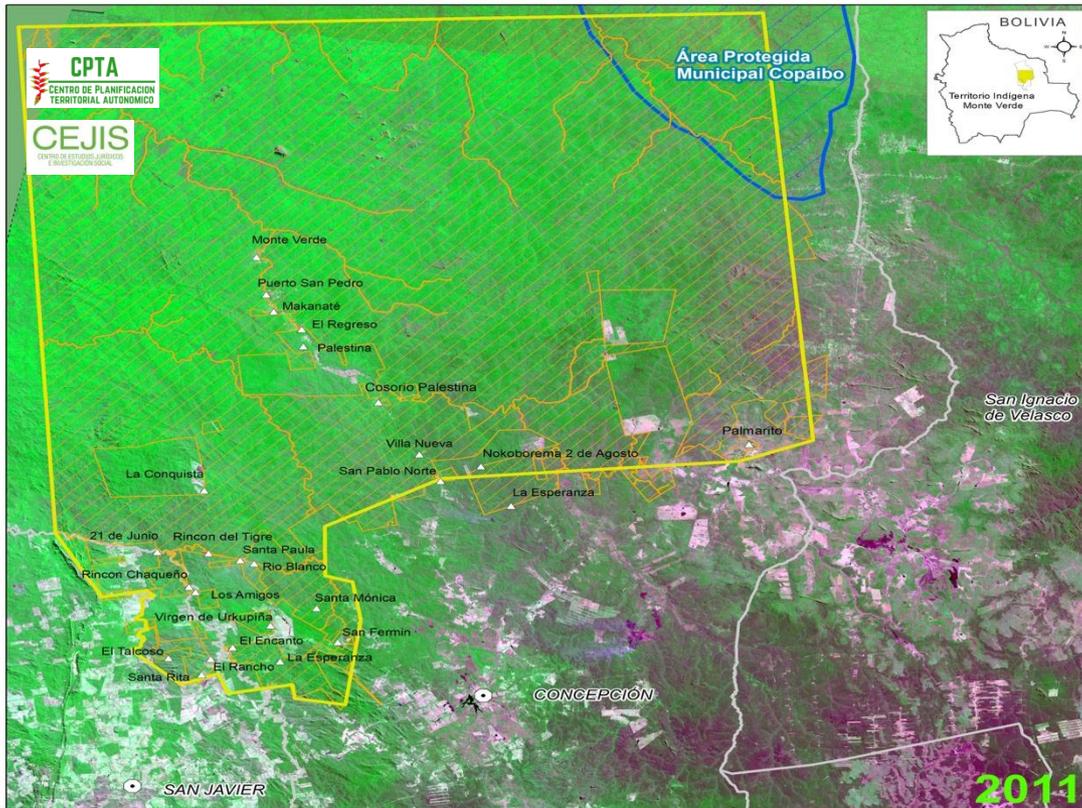
Indigenous populations are the most vulnerable to the impacts of forest fires in Bolivia. The livelihoods of indigenous peoples have been directly affected, as fires have encroached upon their territories, impeding their economic activities such as agriculture, hunting and fishing – all of which have a deeply cultural and political importance for their collective existence.

The intimate relationship that indigenous peoples have with the land and their unique link to their ancestral territory make this situation even more difficult. Temporary displacement (which could ultimately lead to forced migration) and loss of territory put

their cultural and linguistic practices at risk. Traditional knowledge is also threatened when indigenous populations migrate to cities.

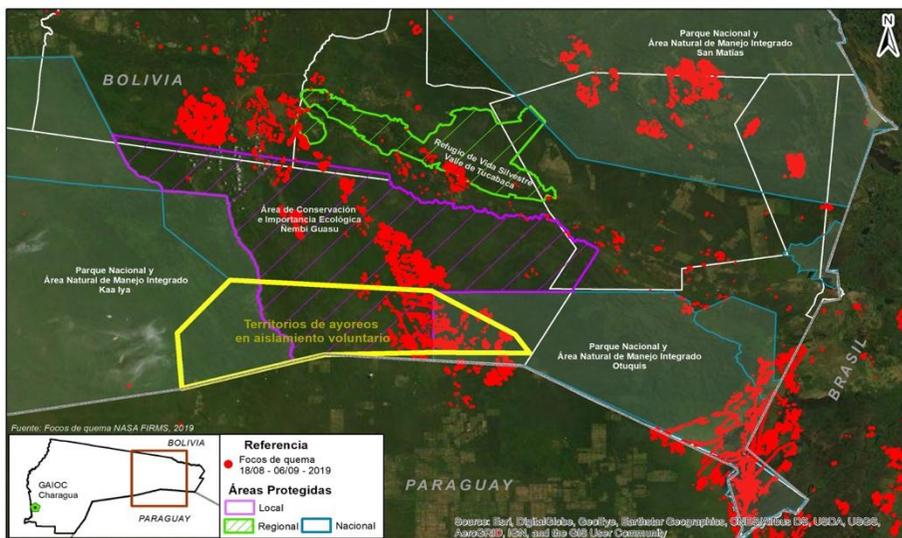
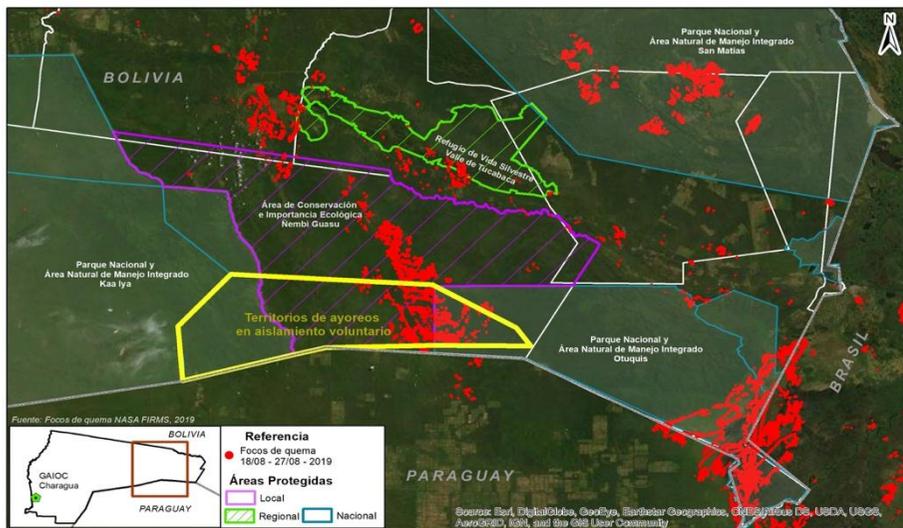
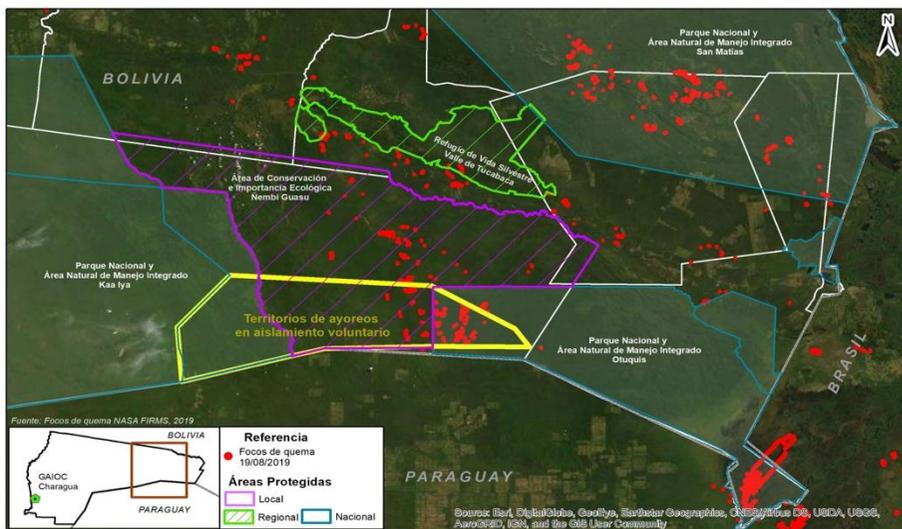
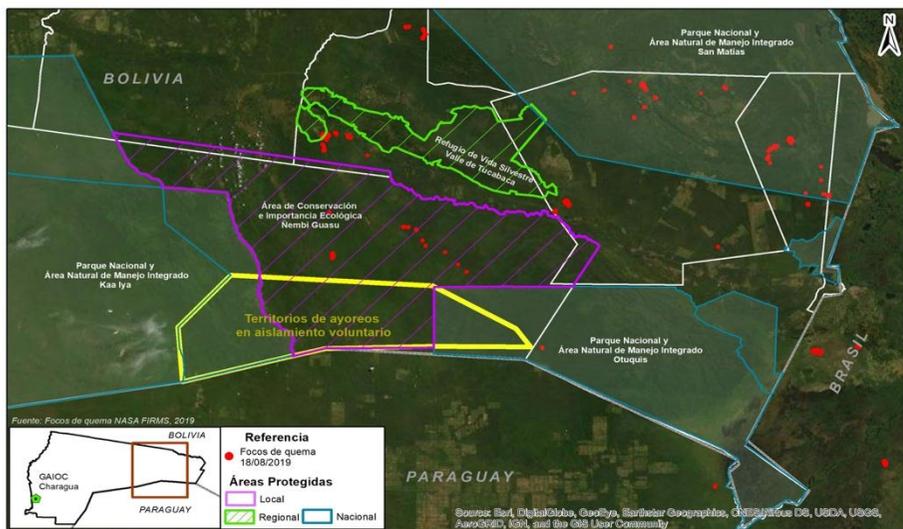
One of the most affected territories in the Chiquitania is Monte Verde, where approximately 3,060 indigenous Chiquitanos live. [Their productive activities revolve around the integral use of forests](#), based on the harvesting of products such as copaibo and coffee. The images below show how this indigenous territory has been affected and, using analysis of multi-temporal satellite data, how the agricultural frontier has been progressively putting pressure on the living space of these Chiquitana communities.

Comparative Image No. 3 Monte Verde Indigenous Territory; progression of the agricultural frontier and fire scars.



Source: Planning Center for Autonomous Territories, CEJIS 2019.

Comparative Image No. 4. Progression of forest fire outbreaks in Ñembi Guasu, Territory of uncontacted indigenous Ayoreo communities



Source: Planning Center for Autonomous Territories, CEJIS 2019.

It must be noted that there are villages that are in serious danger of disappearing due to their diminished population, and whose existences remain closely linked to their territories, as is the case of the Sirionó, Baures and Araona peoples.

In turn, the uncontacted or voluntarily isolated Ayoreo people are in a situation of defenselessness and extreme vulnerability to the destruction of large areas of their territory, upon which they depend physically, culturally and spiritually. This community inhabits Ñembi Guasu, a subnational protected area newly created by the Guaraní Indigenous Autonomous Government of Charagua Iyambae – and one of the most affected areas in the country. As *Comparative Images 4 shows*, fires in this territory appear to come from the deforested areas located to the north. Today the community finds itself unable to meet its subsistence needs in the same self-sufficient manner as they have always historically done.

State responsibilities resulting from the Inter-American Human Rights System

A In light of international standards for the protection of human rights, it is necessary to analyze the actions of the Bolivian State and its relationship with the environmental situation that Bolivia currently faces. The analysis of the regulations and public policies promoted by the Bolivian government demonstrates that its interest in expanding the agricultural frontier is prevailing over its duty to respect the right to the environment. The group of regulations that allows deforestation by farmers and agro-industrial actors through controlled burning implies a potential violation of the right to the environment, since it minimizes control over this activity.

In spite of [efforts reported](#) by National Government Authorities to control the fires (which have been widely publicized through a [public expenditure of around 1 million bolivianos](#)), the fact that a national disaster zone has not been declared deserves consideration, in light of [the fact that the fires and the environmental destruction continue](#) to this date, and the consequent impact on the human rights of Bolivians is aggravated with every passing day.

In representation of Bolivian civil society, it is the opinion of this commission that the State Government has not taken all the necessary measures to protect human rights in general and those of indigenous peoples in particular during this disaster. Notwithstanding [the speeches presented before international bodies, the Government of the State of Bolivia](#) has promoted a series of public policies – protected through legislation – that have been one of the main causes of forest fires in Eastern Bolivia.

Government authorities have shown that – beyond [palliative actions](#) to put out the fire and [a post-fire restoration plan that has been met with skepticism](#) – [they are not willing to review the regulatory framework that allows the expansion of the agricultural frontier](#) in Bolivia.

PETITION

For the reasons explained above, and taking into account state obligations in relation to the protection of the environment within the framework of its obligations to respect and guarantee the human rights of all persons under its jurisdiction, and with due respect we appeal to the Special Rapporteur of Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights on the following points:

1. That the information presented here be received, along with a further commitment to promptly provide any additional information requested or discovered, in view of the fact that the forest fires continue and the human rights impact of this disaster is ongoing.
2. That, pursuant to Article 41 of the Convention and Article 18 of its Statute, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights request information from the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia regarding the measures adopted to address the forest fire emergency, and specifically the facts denounced in this report.
3. That the Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights make a public declaration regarding forest fires in Bolivia and the serious impact they have on human rights and particularly on indigenous peoples' rights, in order to compel the Government of the Bolivian State to take all necessary measures to deal with this disaster and to prevent its recurrence.
4. That a request be made through the Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights for a thematic hearing of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to be held concerning the facts denounced here during the next period of sessions.