

SURINAME

PROTESTS AND
EVIDENCE IGNORED

DEGRADATION OF SAAMAKA
TERRITORY DEEPENS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the 28 of June 2024, the International Land Coalition released a report that shed light on deforestation and forest degradation figures associated with the expansion of logging and mining within the ancestral lands of the Saamaka territory in Suriname. The figures of impact on the report intended to raise local, national and international awareness on forest destruction inside Saamaka lands, especially, the latest forest encroaching activities of the logging multi-national Palmera N.V. The report and its figure of impact were presented to the cabinet of the president of Suriname and other governmental stakeholders hoping it will trigger action. Unfortunately, since the launch of the report last June to October 2024, forest cover loss in the Saamaka territory, associated to Palmera N.V, increased 57% compared to rates observed in the 6 previous years. Coincidental or not, what more evidence is needed for the Government of Suriname to comply with the ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and take action to protect forest, human rights and biodiversity in light of its international commitments?



Launched in June 2024, Suriname, the greenest country in the world? The case of the Saamaka and their fight against deforestation is a [HYPERLINK "https://learn.landcoalition.org/en/resources/saamaka-vs-suriname-case/"](https://learn.landcoalition.org/en/resources/saamaka-vs-suriname-case/)report that provided crucial evidence for the Saamaka people. It showed with robust data analysis that from all deforestation and forest degradation that have occurred inside the Saamaka territory since the year 1990, 77% of it has happened after 2007. This is the year when the Inter-American Court of Human Rights demanded the Government of Suriname to stop forest destructive activities within the Saamaka land (see [HYPERLINK "https://corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_172_ing.pdf"](https://corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_172_ing.pdf)Saamaka judgement).

DISTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT AMONG GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS

Equipped with this knowledge, on the 3rd of July 2024, about 100 Saamaka people gathered in front of the Cabinet of the president of the Republic of Suriname Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi, the office of the vice-president Mr. Ronnie Brunswijk and the speaker of the house Mr. Marinus Bee to hand them in this report and present these decision makers with the figures of impact. The Saamaka leaders leading the march asked these people to stop road construction by Palmera N.V and the forest destruction along it. Also to stop the activities within Palmera logging concession until a proper FPIC procedure would have taken place. A director of the cabinet of the president, Mrs. Natalie Ramadhin-Amatmohamed received the report and promised to pass it to the President.

Furthermore, the figures of impact later published in the report were also presented prior to its official launch during a public debate that took place on the 24 of May, 2024, where the Ministry of Justice and Police, the Agent of the State of Suriname for the Organization of American State and the advisor of the president were present and actively participated in the debate. The public event also included the presence of the French Ambassador and many CSOs like ACT, WWF and Tropenbos. The participants in the debate acknowledged the importance of these figures and their implication for the implementation of the Saamaka judgement as well as the urgent need to create more awareness with robust data, among governmental stakeholders and civil society.



Saamaka leader during public debate on deforestation figures inside Saamaka ancestral lands and which were published later in the report. Source: VSG, May 28, 2024



SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

Additionally to this lobby among governmental stakeholders and shocked by the information in the report, on the 28th of June this year, more than 200 Saamaka people, majority women of all ages, mobilized to the Palmera road. They were protesting against the illegal extraction of their timber, the disruption of their agriculture fields and the damage of their forest with its sacred grounds. They blocked the road, impeding the passing of Palmera N.V trucks carrying their logs and through rituals they asked the ancestors and forest spirits to help them stop that giant. The protest felt nationally and internationally and high level workers of Palmera N.V presented to the site to talk with the protesters.





*Saamaka women protesting, asking
Palmera to stop. Source: I.C/Kiano Gunter*

BUT TREE COVER LOSS INCREASES

Although the Government of Suriname and the logging sector of Suriname acted triggered by the mobilization of the people and the exposure of the impact of the road, logging and mining within Saamaka lands, no action has been taken to stop road construction and the forest destruction along it nor to enter in dialogue with the Saamaka. On the contrary, since the launch of our report the 28th of June, forest disturbances continue to occur in the Saamaka territory, particularly propelled by Palmera Timber Processing NV company. Saamaka community members from villages nearby the activities reported that Palmera has been working in the last months day and night. By using the integrated alert system from Global Forest Watch, which combines data from the GLAD-L, GLAD-S2, and RADD alert systems, we were able to detect loss of forest cover between end of June 2024 and the end of September 2024. We account for a 57% increase in forest loss due to the company progress in contested lands. The increase is particularly spectacular since the company's footprint was 793 hectares since the beginning of its activity in 2018. In the last 3 months, the footprint increases by another 454 hectares, extending logging existing track and areas, deeper in the Saamaka tropical moist forests. This approach allowed us to benefit from the higher accuracy and faster detection provided by multiple satellite systems, ensuring that we could accurately track forest disturbances more reliably and avoid false positives by relying on "highest confidence" alerts. These methods and remote sensing tools allow us to monitor the, in this case adverse, effects of making forest degradation and deformation visible.



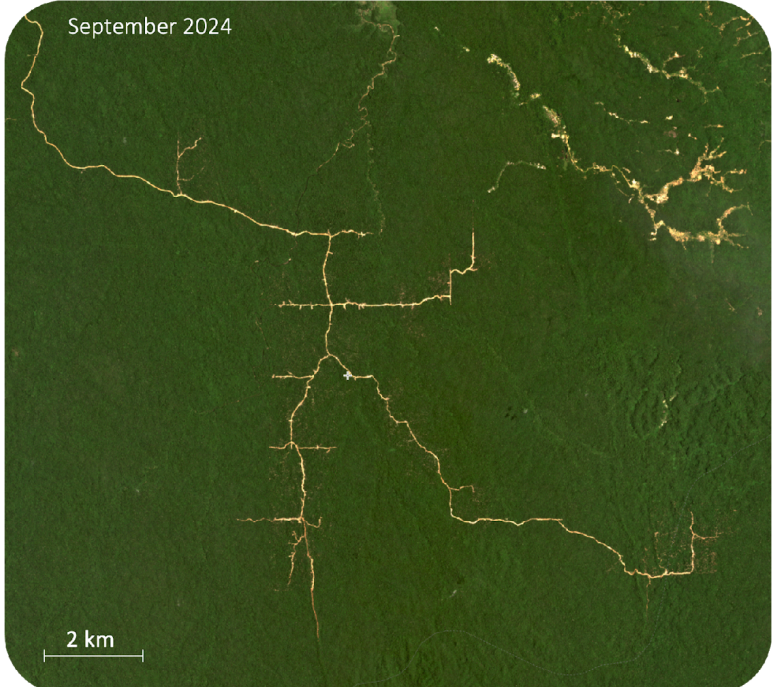
September 2023



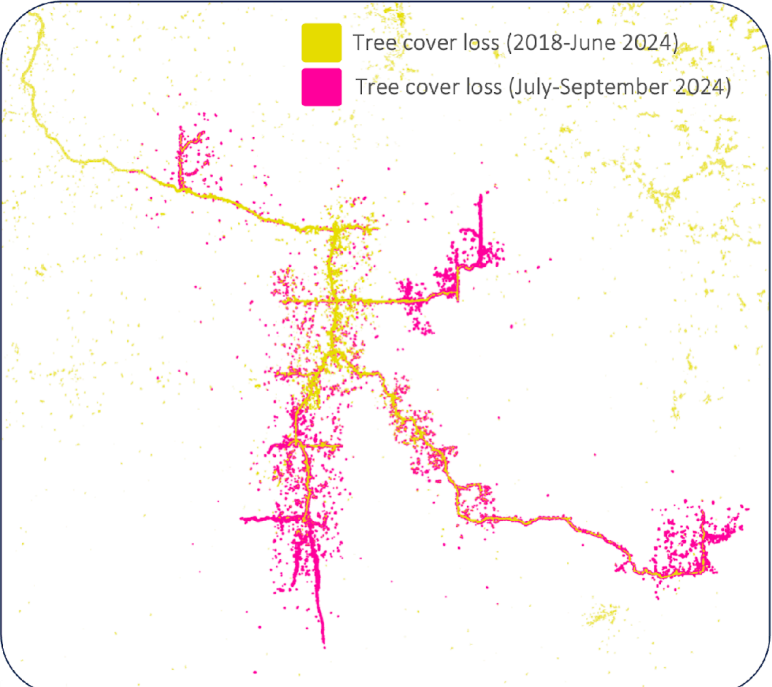
February 2024



September 2024



■ Tree cover loss (2018-June 2024)
■ Tree cover loss (July-September 2024)



Source: Planet-NICFI basemaps are also available for direct view, streaming, and download at www.planet.com/nicfi



Source: Integrated Deforestation Alerts. UMD/GLAD and WUR, accessed through Global Forest Watch

With the accelerated tree cover loss in the last three months logging operations seem to be intensifying in the Saamaka territory. This is on par with what local communities in a neighboring village have reported.

We call upon the Government of Suriname to act coherently with the international commitments they have acquired to respect the rights of indigenous and tribal people of Suriname, to protect biodiversity and mitigate climate change.

