MAKE THE RIGHT CHANGE

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When thinking of the impact of climate change, we usually think of ourselves and how it affects our own lives negatively. Now try and imagine what it is like for the 1.6 billion people who depend on the world’s forest resources for their livelihood.

Deforestation is one of the leading drivers of climate change, there was the equivalent of 10 football pitches lost per minute in 2023. This is rapidly damaging and destroying the homes of over 200 million indigenous people who inhabit the rainforests. In the Amazon rainforest there has been somewhere between 60-80% of the forest illegally logged. 90% of the rainforest in Indonesia have also been illegally logged. Due to timber tracking, indigenous territories have experienced a 129% increase in forest loss.

Compared to other areas of the world such as Australia and New Zealand there are little or no laws or regulations in protecting indigenous people and their habitats and land. Due to this a quarter of indigenous people are deprived of resources in the forest due to this growing global issue. According to the National Geographic, over the past 70 years the total area of tropical rainforests has been reduced by more than half, to 6.2 to 7.8 million square kilometers. These figures are astronomical. They're scary.

All hope is not lost, there are ways to save what little forests we have left. As previously mentioned, the lack of protection around indigenous peoples’ rights and land is a huge contender people ignore when it comes to this issue. Ignorance isn't always bliss! The UN general assembly adopted the Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People, since September 2007. This has been recognized in over 140 countries, yet it is not legally binding, meaning it is relatively useless. If all countries and governments signed up to the provisions, and they were recognized as law then they would all have to respect them and keep the rights and homes of indigenous people protected. This is not only for benefit but for ours too. In Brazil indigenous lands that are recognized and protected by the government only experienced 1% loss native vegetation, twenty times less than privately owned areas.

If that’s not a sign to advocate and protect the land these people protect and depend on, I don’t know what is. Help create the right type of change, educate yourself, sign petitions, help those who can’t help themselves.