

Lebanon turns to neighbours for help fighting forest fires

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Forest fires have erupted in large swathes of land in Lebanon and Syria

Lebanon has turned to its neighbours for help with battling forest fires that have ravaged homes and killed a volunteer firefighter in the Mediterranean country, the premier said on Tuesday.

"We have contacted the Europeans who will send means of help," Prime

Minister Saad Hariri said in comments carried by national news agency NNA.

Dozens of fires have erupted around Lebanon in the past few days, the head of civil defence Raymond Khattar told NNA, amid unusually high temperatures and [strong winds](#).

Thick smoke has been seen drifting over the outskirts of Beirut, over the mountainous Chouf region to its southeast, and the southern city of Saida.

In the Chouf, an area known for its trees, a volunteer firefighter lost his life trying to put out the flames, his family said.

In an area south of Beirut, firefighters have for two days been unable to stop the blaze, which has burnt four homes to the ground and caused dozens to suffer from breathing difficulties, NNA said.

Interior Minister Raya El-Hassan said Cyprus and Greece had responded to Lebanon's call for help.

"Two Cypriot planes have been working to put out the fires since yesterday," she said on Twitter.

"Greece has responded to our request and will send two planes to help us," she added, while Jordan also said it was ready to help.

NNA said the army was working together with helicopters and the Cypriot planes to fight the blaze, with access sometimes impeded by thick smoke and high-voltage power lines.

UN peacekeeping force UNIFIL, whose members usually patrol the country's southern border with Israel, has also joined in the efforts, the

agency said.

In neighbouring war-torn Syria, fires also killed two people, Syrian state media said.

Flames have ripped through parts of the coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartus, as well as the central province of Homs but most have been brought under control, state news agency SANA said.

Two members of the Latakia forestry department were killed while fighting the blaze, it said.

In Tartus, the fires—mostly stamped out—coincided with the olive harvest, the governor told SANA.

In Homs, trees were burnt and electricity networks disrupted in mountainous areas, the agency reported.

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