

# Rain helps firefighters in Greece but flare-ups continue

August 12 2021, by Yannick Pasquet

---



Greece has been devastated by two weeks of relentless wildfires.

Rain overnight in wildfire-ravaged areas of Greece have helped "improve the situation" on Thursday, a local mayor said, but hundreds of firefighters were still battling to contain new flare-ups.

Fires fanned by Greece's most severe heatwave in decades—which authorities have blamed on climate change—have burnt through nearly 100,000 hectares over the last fortnight, leaving three dead, hundreds homeless, thousands forced to evacuate, and economic and environmental devastation in their wake.

"The [fire](#) fronts are still active" on the island of Evia and the Arcadia region of the Peloponnese peninsula and "fires are constantly flaring up" in both areas, a firefighting official told AFP.

And a new fire broke out on Thursday morning in a forested area of Aspropyrgos, 20 kilometres (12 miles) northwest of Athens.

After weeks of punishing temperatures often well over 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit), a lower 33 degrees Celsius was forecast for Thursday.

The falling temperatures and overnight rain in Evia, the Peloponnese and central Greece had helped "improve the situation," said Stathis Koulis, the mayor of Gortynia.

The village of Gortynia in a mountainous area of Arcadia 200 kilometres (120 miles) west of Athens has become the primary focus in the Peloponnese, with deep ravines posing a challenge to firefighters.



Greek firefighters have been bolstered by overseas reinforcements.

Twenty villages have been evacuated in the area over the past few days and 680 firefighters, including more than a hundred sent to help from France, and five water-dropping aircraft have been relentlessly battling the flames.

Greek firefighters have been bolstered by more than 1,200 reinforcements from numerous countries particularly in Europe, as well as vehicles and equipment.

In just eight days, 568 fires have been recorded across Greece.

## 'Can't take it anymore'

Nearly 100,000 hectares of forests and farmland have burned since July 29 in Greece's worst wildfires since 2007, the European Forest Fire Information System said.

"I can't take it anymore," said Kostis Angelou as he wandered between the corpses of his goats, all 372 of them burnt by a fire that devoured forests on Evia.

The 44-year-old farmer managed to survive by spending hours under an irrigation water pipe, surrounded by flames.



Greece has only just started counting the cost of the damage caused by the weeks

of fires.



Kostis Angelou walks among the goats he lost on the island of Evia.

"A saint saved me," he said.

The Mediterranean has been hit by a savage fire season, with Algeria announcing three days of national mourning starting Thursday for the 69 dead killed in blazes there.

Italy has also been hit by fires, and the island of Sicily recorded 48.8 degrees Celsius (119.8 Fahrenheit) on Wednesday, which if confirmed

would be a new European record, beating Greece's previous high.

Eight people were killed in fires in Turkey's south earlier in the month, while in the north the death toll rose to five on Thursday from flash floods that have swept across several Black Sea regions.

The latest extreme weather events come after a "code red" report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was published on Monday warning that the world is warming far faster than previously feared.

The Mediterranean has been singled out as a "[climate change](#) hotspot", with increasing temperatures and aridity lengthening fire seasons and doubling the areas potential burnt, according to draft IPCC assessment seen exclusively by AFP.

© 2021 AFP

Citation: Rain helps firefighters in Greece but flare-ups continue (2021, August 12) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-08-firefighters-greece-flare-ups.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.