

# Algeria counts costs after deadly wildfires

July 27 2023



Wildfires raging across Algeria during a blistering heat wave killed 34 people and forced mass evacuations.

Algerians in the fire-ravaged northeast were Thursday counting the cost of the blazes that killed 34 people, destroyed homes and reduced vast forest areas to scorched wastelands.

The wildfires raged for days, mainly through the mountain forests of the Kabylia region on the Mediterranean coast, fanned by winds during blistering [summer heat](#).

"Many people are traumatized. Our aim is to provide moral support and psychological care," said a member of a psychiatrist support unit sent to the disaster area.

Water and electricity remained cut off in wide areas but aid supplies were arriving.

"We need help, all the help we can get," said a man at an aid supply point in Bejaia, 250 kilometers (150 miles) from Algiers. "We need clothes, mattresses, things like that."

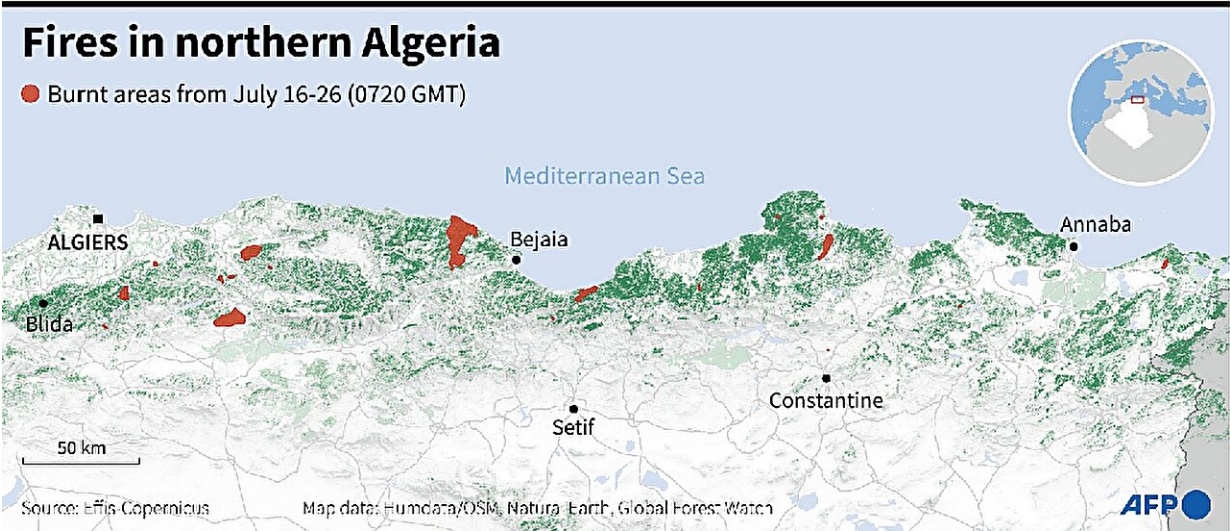
In the small village of Ait Oussalah, 16 people were killed as they tried to flee the flames, witnesses said, pointing out that they made up 10 percent of the village population.

Tahar Chibane, 35, from the town of Ait Oussalah, lost several [family members](#) and almost all of his farmlands.

"We've lost 99 percent of our land, and suffered great human losses," he said at a funeral ceremony in nearby Souk el-Dejema. "We're still standing on our feet, because of God's protection."



This image grab taken from AFPTV video footage shows smoke clouds covering the sky during wildfires in the forests of Bejaia in northern Algeria on July 25, 2023.



Map of northern Algeria showing areas affected by fires.



Northern and eastern Algeria battle forest fires every summer, but they have been exacerbated by this year's Mediterranean heat wave.

Djudi Zenoud, also burying a loved one, said, "How can you remain sane when so many members of your family are lost at once?"

Algeria's President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has sent his condolences to

the families of those killed, among them 10 soldiers trapped by flames in Bejaia province.

At the height of the disaster, more than 100 fires burned across 17 provinces, said Interior Minister Brahim Merad, the fires forcing the evacuation of more than 1,500 people.

More than 8,000 civil defense personnel were mobilized, along with 500 [fire](#) trucks and multiple chartered aircraft.

Merad said [local authorities](#) have been instructed to assess the damage and losses, and to "identify the victims in order to compensate them as soon as possible".

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