

Algeria fires fanned by winds, extreme heat kill 34

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Algeria has mobilized thousands of firefighters and hundreds of firetrucks to fight the wildfires.

Wildfires raging across Algeria during a blistering heat wave have killed more than 30 people and forced mass evacuations, the government said

on Monday.

As temperatures hit 48 degrees Celsius (118 Fahrenheit) in parts of the North African country, it recorded 97 blazes across 16 provinces, fanned by strong winds, said the interior ministry.

The fires killed at least 34 people, including 10 soldiers, as they raged through residential areas, the interior ministry said, revising an earlier toll of 15 dead.

According to that initial toll, at least 26 people were also injured.

Some 1,500 people were evacuated from the Bejaia, Bouira and Jijel provinces east of the capital Algiers, according to the ministry.

The three provinces in Algeria's Mediterranean coastal region have seen the worst of the fires.

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on Monday expressed his condolences to the families of the deceased.

The interior ministry said that 7,500 firefighters and 350 firetrucks were mobilized with aerial support to fight the flames.

Operations were underway to extinguish fires in six provinces, it added, calling on citizens to "avoid areas affected by the fires" and to report new blazes on toll-free phone numbers.



Map showing the areas burned by fires in northern Algeria since July 17.

"Civil protection services remain mobilized until the fires are completely extinguished," the ministry said.

The Bejaia prosecutor's office has ordered a preliminary probe to identify the causes of the blazes and potential perpetrators, it said in a statement.

Images shared by local media showed fields and forests that had caught fire in the area as well as charred vehicles and storefronts destroyed by the flames.

In the northeastern province of Tizi Ouzou, 15 fires were extinguished late Sunday, according to civil protection forces.

Fires regularly rage through forests and fields in Algeria in summer, and this year have been exacerbated by a heat wave that has seen several

Mediterranean countries break temperature records.

Mediterranean heat wave

In neighboring Tunisia, temperatures on Monday neared 50 degrees Celsius.

Tunisia's state energy supplier STEG announced planned half-hour to one-hour power cuts in a bid to preserve the network's performance.



A wildfire in Tunisia near the border with Algeria has forced the evacuation of hundreds of Melloula residents.

Fires raged again on Monday in a Tunisian pine forest near the border with Algeria, after another blaze in the area last week.

At least 300 people were evacuated by sea and by land from the village of Melloula, according to the national guard.

AFP journalists saw extensive damage near the town of Nefza, about 150 kilometers (90 miles) west of Tunis.

During last week's fire, a border crossing had to close temporarily, according to Tunisian officials who confirmed 470 hectares (1,100 acres) of forest had been burned.

In some other North African countries such as Morocco and Libya, temperatures were relatively normal compared to annual averages.

Algeria's state energy firm Sonelgaz on Sunday reported a peak in electricity consumption at 18,697 megawatts.

In August 2022, massive blazes killed 37 in Algeria's northeastern El Tarf province.

It was preceded by the deadliest summer in decades, with 90 people killed in such fires in 2021, particularly in the Kabylie region.



Residents extinguish a fire in Algeria's northwestern coastal town of Tabarka.

In a bid to avoid a repeat of previous years' death tolls, the authorities had announced a series of measures in the months leading up to peak summer heat.

Tebboune in April announced the acquisition of six medium-sized water-bombing aircraft.

This was followed by the interior ministry similarly announcing the imminent acquisition of one such aircraft and the leasing of six others the following month.

Also in May, authorities said they were preparing for wildfires by constructing landing strips for helicopters and fire-fighting drones.

Scientists rank the Mediterranean region as a climate-change "hot spot", with the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warning of more heatwaves, crop failures, droughts, rising seas and influxes of invasive species.

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