

# Submerged homes, heat waves fuel Mexico climate angst

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Homes destroyed by the sea are seen in the community of El Bosque in southern Mexico.

Waves wash over abandoned homes in a Mexican village slowly being swallowed by the sea—a symbol of the climate change effects being felt

by the major fossil fuel producer.

The school where Adrian Perez used to attend classes in the community of El Bosque in the southern state of Tabasco now stands in ruins.

Each time he passes it going fishing, he is reminded of what has been lost to the sea.

"It's hard. I studied there and look at what it became," the 24-year-old said.

"The climate's destroying us," he added.

This year, heat waves have sent temperatures soaring in Tabasco and much of Mexico, stoking the [climate change debate](#) as the country prepares for a June 2 presidential election.

According to environmental group Greenpeace, El Bosque is the first community in Mexico to be officially recognized as displaced by climate change.

In February, the Tabasco state congress approved its relocation.

"We hear about climate change all the time but we never thought that it would come to us," said 34-year-old Cristy Echeverria, who lost her home.

According to the World Meteorological Organization, ocean warming as well as the melting of glaciers and ice sheets caused the global sea level to reach its highest point on record last year.



El Bosque sits on a small peninsula in the Gulf of Mexico, exposed to Atlantic storms and hurricanes.

Around 700 people once lived in El Bosque, which sits on a small peninsula jutting out into the Gulf of Mexico and exposed to Atlantic storms and hurricanes.

In the waters offshore, rigs extract the oil and gas on which Latin America's second-largest economy so heavily depends.

Down the coast, the government of outgoing President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has built a major new oil refinery in Tabasco, his home state—part of his efforts to achieve energy self-sufficiency.

## **Records melt**

Tabasco is one of the areas of Mexico hit hardest by this year's [heat waves](#), with temperatures in the state reaching 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

Since March, 48 [heat-related deaths](#) have been registered across the country, according to the government.

Even Mexico City—whose altitude has traditionally given it a temperate climate—recorded its highest-ever temperature of 34.7 degrees Celsius on Saturday.

The heat and below-normal rainfall last year have stirred fears of worsening water shortages.



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The average annual availability of water per capita in Mexico has already fallen by 68 percent since 1960, according to the Mexican Institute of Competitiveness.

Despite international pressure to reduce [greenhouse gas emissions](#), Lopez Obrador has promoted fossil fuel production during his six-year term in a bid to ensure [energy independence](#).

The government says it is offsetting the impact by planting one million hectares of trees, which Lopez Obrador has called "the world's most important reforestation program."

Pablo Ramirez, a climate campaigner at Greenpeace Mexico, warned that there was "no [public policy](#) that can address the serious impacts that [climate change](#) is having and that are going to get worse."

## **Clean energy plans**

Claudia Sheinbaum, the ruling party candidate leading the race to replace Lopez Obrador, has promised to invest billions of dollars in clean energy while also supporting state oil company Pemex.

"We're going to promote the energy transition," said Sheinbaum, a scientist by training who was a contributing author for the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Sheinbaum would take a different approach to Lopez Obrador on energy, according to Pamela Starr, a professor at the University of

Southern California.



'We're not responsible for everything that's happening, but we're paying for it,' said Cristy Echeverria, who lost her home.

"She's going to encourage much more active investment in clean energy," Starr told AFP.

Opposition presidential candidate Xochitl Galvez has said that Mexico needs "to end our addiction to fossil fuels" and proposed to close some refineries.

The campaign promises give little comfort to Echeverria.

"We're not responsible for everything that's happening, but we're paying for it," she said.

"We're not going to be the only ones."

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