

# Turkey battles forest fires for third day

August 18 2024, by Fulya OZERKAN

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Firefighters battle a strong forest fire in Turkey's Aegean city of Izmir for a third day.

Firefighters were battling a strong forest fire in Turkey's Aegean city of Izmir for a third day on Saturday, AFP reporters said, a day after hundreds of local people in nearby villages had to be evacuated.

Firefighters said they had partially beaten back the flames that have been threatening the port city over the last three days, although fires were still burning in the nearby forests.

In the northern suburb of Ornekkoy, AFP journalists saw the charred remains of several buildings and vehicles in an [industrial zone](#) while gray smoke billowed into the sky.

"We don't know what to do. Our workplace is located in the middle of the fire. We have lost our livelihood," said 48-year-old Hanife Erbil, who earns a living collecting paper and plastic waste.

The pine trees that once crowned the surrounding hills were also burned.

"It was such a beautiful route, it smelled of [pine trees](#) everywhere. It makes me want to cry," said taxi driver Ayhan.

The smell of smoke was hanging over the city, the third most-populated in Turkey.

Firefighters from other Turkish cities have been sent as reinforcements and the army has been mobilized.

"Everyone is working hard. I'm on my 36th hour of service. We can say the fire is partially under control," said Izmir firefighter Arjin Erol.



The fire in the western province of Izmir damages houses.

## **Evacuations**

The fire started on Thursday and spread quickly to residential areas by winds blowing at 50 kilometers (30 miles) an hour.

Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said 900 residents in five affected districts had been evacuated Friday night in Izmir.

On Saturday, those villages remained empty for security reasons, except for a handful of volunteers who left food and water for animals living in the forest, AFP journalists saw.

Wild animals, cats and dogs died in the fire but no human victim has yet been reported.

The fire damaged 16 buildings and affected 78 people, with 29 of them admitted to hospital, the Turkish health ministry said.

"Currently, two planes and eleven helicopters are continuing to intervene," said Agriculture and Forestry Ministry Ibrahim Yumakli, after the [strong winds](#) had earlier grounded the helicopters and water bombers.



Officials say seven people were detained Izmir over alleged links to the fire.

Residents of the city should not be worried, he added.

Four helicopters were dropping water on the flames throughout the day, backed by two planes, AFP journalists witnessed.

Around 1,600 hectares (3,900 acres) have been affected, the minister said, adding that the challenging terrain was making it difficult to put out the fire at its origin.

## **Fresh flames**

Five other fires continue to rage in forest areas in other cities in Turkey, including northwestern Bolu and Aydin in the west.

And new fires broke out again in Izmir late on Saturday engulfing several districts including Bayindir and the popular holiday resort of Cesme, local mayor Cemil Tugay said on social media.

The authorities have controlled the fire in Cesme that lies across the Greek island of Chios, he said.

Officials said seven people were detained in Izmir over alleged links to the fire.



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To come to the aid of its regional ally, Azerbaijan has sent a water bomber plane, the Turkish presidency announced.

Scientists say climate change makes [extreme weather events](#) including heat waves more likely, longer lasting and more intense, increasing the risk of wildfires.

In June, a [fire](#) that broke out in Mardin in southeastern Turkey claimed the lives of 15 people.

Observers however say Turkey has made progress since it was hit by the

worst fires in its history in 2021.

At the time President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government was criticized for its failure to mobilize due to a lack of planes and helicopters.

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