

Deadly fires rage along Algeria coast, spread to Tunisia

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Algeria was battling to contain devastating forest fires along its Mediterranean coast on Tuesday, in an inferno which has killed at least 34 people, authorities said, adding they had managed to control about four-fifths of the blaze.



Burnt trees and vehicles are pictured in the aftermath of a wildfire in Bejaia, Algeria, 25 July 2023. Reuters/Ramzi Boudina

Fanned by strong winds, fires had also spread to neighbouring Tunisia, forcing the closure of two border crossings.

A relentless heatwave has caused havoc across the planet this month, with temperatures breaking records in China, the United States, southern Europe and North Africa, leaving a trail of devastation in its wake.

Greece has been battling forest fires for the past week, triggering a mass evacuation of thousands of tourists from its most popular holiday resorts.

The fires broke out in several provinces in Algeria on Monday, ripping through forests, olive groves and low-lying shrubland. More than 8,000 firefighters were deployed to bring the flames under control.

Algerian civil protection services said 15 fires were raging across eight regions on Tuesday at Skikda, Jijel, Bouira, Bejaia, Tebessa, Medea, Setif, and El Tarf.



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Ten of the 34 victims reported on Monday were soldiers. Authorities said they had evacuated some 1,500 people from their homes.

Temperatures of 49 degrees Celsius (120 Fahrenheit) were recorded in some cities in Tunisia this week.

Civil protection units, backed by forestry workers and the air force were working to put out fires in several areas of Tabarka in the northwest, bordering Algeria.

Moez Tria, spokesman for Tunisian civil protection, said priority was given to protecting residential communities in the region and to prevent the blaze from reaching an airport in the area.

Fires also broke out in other regions of the country including Bizerte, Beja and Siliana regions.

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