Where Wildfires Are Raging in Europe and North Africa

Firefighters have scrambled to extinguish blazes in at least 10 countries as a heat wave has swept the Mediterranean region. Here's what to know.

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Near Palermo, Sicily, on Wednesday. At least three people have died in fires on the island this week.Alberto Lo Bianco/LaPresse, via Associated Press

Hundreds of wildfires have burned their way through Southern Europe and North Africa this week, with residents of nearby communities forced to flee the billowing smoke and advancing blazes. Firefighters in at least 10 countries in the region have mobilized firefighting planes and trucks to douse the blazes, which have blackened thousands of acres of land, consumed buildings and killed dozens of people.

With the summer season typically a popular time for tourists, visitors to the region have also been caught up in the crisis as evacuations were ordered from some coastal resorts, seaside villages and islands. Some roads have also been closed and flights suspended.

Stoking the flames is a recent heat wave that has seared the land and sent temperatures to sweltering highs — creating prime conditions for the blazes to take hold and spread.

Which countries are affected?

- In **Algeria**, wildfires east of the capital, Algiers, this week killed dozens of people and prompted the evacuation of more than 1,500 households; the fires also spread to neighboring **Tunisia**.

- In **Croatia**, firefighters were still supervising a blaze on Friday that had broken out near the city of Dubrovnik and burned about 1,000 acres, the fire brigade said.

- In **France**, blazes burned on the island of Corsica and led to road closures near the southern city of Nice.

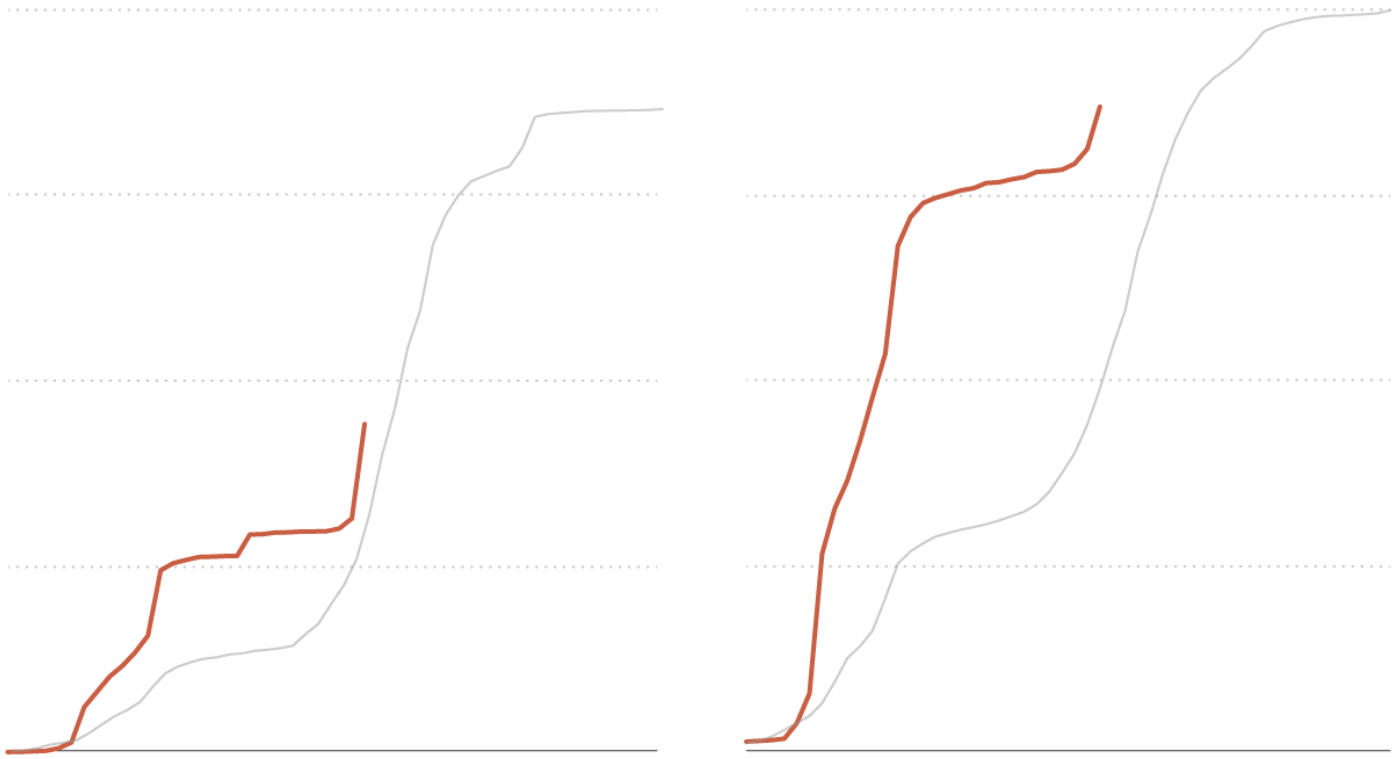
- In **Greece**, hundreds of firefighters have pushed to contain blazes on the mainland and on the islands of Corfu, Evia and Rhodes, which have razed around 100,000 acres of land and led to the evacuation of about 20,000 people. At least four people have died, including two pilots whose plane crashed in firefighting operation in Evia, and the blazes caused explosions in western Greece after reaching an ammunitions warehouse. By Friday afternoon, officials said those blazes were mostly under control but that firefighters were on still standby and dousing some new fires.

- In **Italy**, which bore the brunt of the recent heat wave, firefighters in the south of the country said they had responded to more than 1,300 incidents since Sunday, and officials in Sicily said that three people on the island had died in "devastating" blazes this week.
- In **Portugal**, firefighters said they had contained a blaze on Wednesday at a national park in Cascais, a coastal municipality close to Lisbon.
- In **Spain**, firefighters contained a wildfire overnight on Wednesday on the island of Gran Canaria, where about 1,000 acres burned and the region's civil guard evacuated some residents. A wildfire last week on La Palma, another of the Canary Islands, had burned at least 11,000 acres.
- In **Syria**, fires have raged in the country's west in a rural part of the Latakia area.
- In **Turkey**, dozens of aircraft and hundreds of firefighters have been responding to blazes in the Antalya region along the Mediterranean coast.

Is this normal?

No, at least in the European Union. Countries there have seen far more fires and a larger burned area this year than in an average fire season, with a sharp rise during the recent heat wave.

Wildfire season in the European Union



Cumulative burned area

Cumulative number of fires

Average

since 2006

400,000 cumulative hectares

1,000 cumulative detections

Average

since 2006