Algerian forest fires kill at least 37 people and destroy nearly 2,600 hectares

CNN — normal

At least 37 people have been killed and several injured in wildfires that ravaged mountainous areas in the east of Algeria, according to the state-run Algeria Press Service (APS).

Algerian Minister of Interior Kamal Beldjoudarly told state television that 24 people lost their lives in fires in El Tarf, near the border with Tunisia, and two others earlier in Setif.

Firefighters and helicopters are trying to contain a number of blazes in the country's east.

Beldjoudarly added that overall, 2,600 hectares were destroyed as a result of the fires, along with nearly 1,800 hectares of brush and some 800 hectares of forest cover in El Tarf, Setif, Souk Ahras, Jijel, Skikda and Tipasa.

He said the state has deployed fire trucks, Air Force helicopters and other capabilities to extinguish fires.

Over the past 24 hours, a total of 118 forest fires have been registered in the country, according to the Algerian Civil Protection Unit.

The agency said that 1,700 civil protection officers and 280 trucks have been deployed in their efforts to control the fires.

Prime Minister Ayman bin Abd al-Rahman said on Thursday that all those affected by the recent fires will be compensated, according to private Algerian media outlet Al-Nahar.

Much of the northern hemisphere is battling extreme heat and below average rainfall, or even drought, raising the risk of wildfires. One year ago, at least 65 were killed in wildfires in the mountainous region of Algeria.