Thousands flee wildfires in Middle East amid heatwave

Flames rise at the scene of a forest fire in Lebanon (AP)

Wildfires around the Middle East triggered by a heatwave in the region have killed two people and forced thousands to leave their homes.
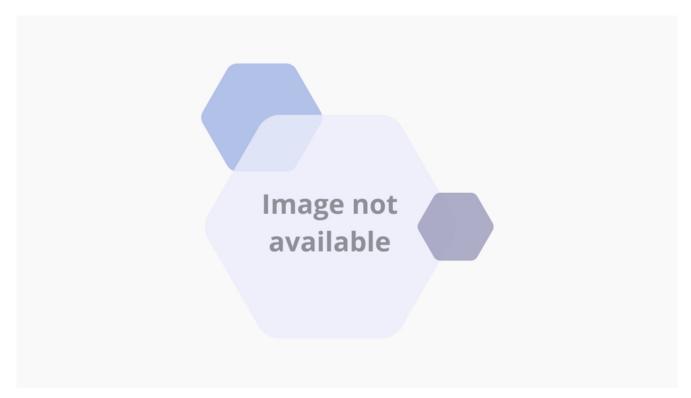
The fires also detonated landmines along the Lebanon-Israel border, according to state media and officials.

The areas hit by the heatwave are Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories. The fires come amid an intense heatwave that is unusual for this time of year.

Wildfires spread across different areas of Israel and the West Bank for a second day on Saturday, forcing thousands of people to evacuate their homes.

Israeli police said that firefighters and police forces evacuated 5,000 residents from the city of Nof Hagalil in northern Israel.

One of the hardest hit countries is war-torn Syria, where fires have killed two people and left dozens suffering from breathing problems over the past two days. The wildfires also burnt wide areas of forests, mostly in the central province of Homs and the coastal province of Latakia.

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With firefighters overwhelmed, some residents helped them using primitive methods such as carrying water in buckets and pouring them on the fire.

The director of the forestry department at the Latakia Agricultural Department, Bassem Douba, was quoted as saying by state news agency SANA that the number of fires reached 85 in different sites.

Also in Latakia province, fires in President Bashar Assad's hometown of Qardaha heavily damaged a building used as a storage for the state-owned tobacco company, part of which collapsed.

In Lebanon, firefighters backed by army helicopters fought blazes in the country's north, centre and south. A big fire in the southern village of Bater burnt hundreds of pine trees and was getting close to homes when it was put under control.

Along the border with Israel, fires were reported by Lebanon's state news agency

in several villages, some of them triggering explosions of landmines placed along the heavily guarded front.

Source: https://www.irishexaminer.com/world/arid-40062656.html

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