
Massive Wildfires in Chile Devastate Entire Town, Kill 6

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The death toll has reached six, with the fires displacing thousands of people in a government-declared state of emergency.

More than a thousand houses were reduced to ashes in the town of Santa Olga, Chile, as forest fires continue consuming a large part of the central zone of the South American country.

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"Nobody can imagine what happened in Santa Olga. What we have experienced here is literally like Dante's Inferno," said Mayor of Constitucion, Carlos Valenzuela. "We were recovering after the last earthquake, but this tragedy has messed up everything."

The death toll has reached six. As the fires displace thousands of people, the government has declared a state of emergency and has allocated personnel and resources to handle the situation.

The National Forestry Corporation said in a statement dozens of growing wildfires have so far destroyed some 238,000 hectares of forests in central and southern Chile, forcing the evacuation of at least 4,000 people.

"From the beginning we have dedicated all our efforts and resources," said President Michelle Bachelet on Tuesday. She also highlighted that the priority is "to save the lives of our compatriots."

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Bachelet, who spoke in a press conference, thanked the international aid that has reached Chile so far, especially specialized rescuers sent from Mexico, Colombia, Peru and France.

"There are 99 fires, of which 30 have been controlled, and our civil protection corps are now struggling to control the rest," the president said and announced that she'll meet with intelligence agents in coming hours "to determine the causes of these fires," since it has not been ruled out that the fires were provoked due to the abundance of them.

All affected areas are under a state of emergency, while several cities, including capital Santiago, are shrouded in smoke. Thousands of emergency workers and firefighters are trying to curb and extinguish the flames amid strong winds and a heat wave. These natural disasters often occur in parched woods during the summer and many of them are sparked as a result of human activity.
