# National Guard deployed to Los Angeles fire zones as anger builds over government failure to prevent disaster

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The six fires raging across Los Angeles have now claimed more than 12,000 homes and other structures, and at least 11 lives. An estimated 180,000 people remain under evacuation orders and another 166,800 face evacuation warnings as firefighters continue to combat the blazes which have so far consumed about 56 square miles (145 square kilometers) of the city.

The buildings that have burned down include homes, churches, schools, libraries, a synagogue, small stores, banks, restaurants and local landmarks. The total economic losses are currently projected to be as high as $150 billion. More bodies are expected to be discovered as cadaver dogs continue to comb the burnt out husks of former neighborhoods.

On Thursday, Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom deployed 400 California National Guard to various neighborhoods, setting up checkpoints and blockades to ostensibly stop "looting." According to the Los Angeles Country Sheriff's Department, "They will be assisting us with traffic control and critical infrastructure protection."

In practice, the impact has been to stop those who evacuated from checking on their homes and retrieving keepsakes. An Altadena resident told the WSWS, "The fires haven't reached my house yet, and my wife and I, along with several other couples, tried to go back to our homes to rescue our belongings, but we were stopped by the National Guard.

"The sheriff's department keeps saying they are worried about looters, but what looters? The news just keeps reporting about the same 20 arrests. We've been lucky that our home hasn't burned down and we want to rescue what we can while we can."

A curfew order has also been in effect, from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., during which anyone in the burned areas can be arrested.

The two largest fires, the Palisades Fire and the Eaton Fire, are still only eight percent contained and three percent contained, respectively. The high sustained winds from earlier this week have abated somewhat, dropping to 20 miles per hour with gusts up to 50 miles per hour, aiding the firefighting efforts of the 6,200 firefighters on the ground. The National Interagency Fire Center predicts that environmental conditions will continue to improve over the weekend.

One difficulty in dealing with the fires is the fact that the 117 million-gallon (440 million-liter) Santa Ynez Reservoir in Pacific Palisades is currently drained and out of service, taking away water resources which could have been used to fight the blazes. This is compounded by the fact that Democratic Mayor Karen Bass cut the budget of the Los Angeles Fire Department by $17.6 million, while increasing the Los Angeles Police Department budget by $126 million.

In addition to the direct threat the fires pose, the smoke produced by thousands of burning buildings and vehicles is enormously toxic and dangerous. Materials including microplastics, mercury and lead—as well as the chemicals carbon monoxide, benzene and dioxins—are very common in urban fires.

The particulate matter which millions are now breathing are small enough to reach the lungs and bloodstream, increasing the risk of cardiac arrests, heart failure, asthma, strokes and other issues related to the inflammation of the lungs and particulates in the heart. Masks are now strongly recommended for Los Angeles, especially those that stop the smallest PM2.5 particles, but there is no mass coordinated effort to get

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appropriate masks to the population.

The Cedars-Sinai medical campus has already had to offer more pulmonary appointments for patients exhibiting respiratory issues from the smoke, particularly asthma and pulmonary fibrosis (lung scarring which is largely incurable). Moreover, multiple clinics have been forced to close outright as a result of the fires, further stressing the local healthcare infrastructure.

The ongoing fires also highlight the impact of capitalist-induced climate change on modern society, particularly the increased devastation caused by “extreme weather” events. In 2007, the Fourth Assessment Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change showed evidence linking rising global temperatures to extreme weather, including heatwaves, droughts and conditions conducive to wildfires.

In 2021, the Sixth Assessment Report directly linked climate change to to an increased risk of wildfires. It highlighted record-breaking wildfires, including the deadly Camp Fire in 2018, and emphasized the role of climate change in driving these wildfires.

The climate trends warned about in the assessment reports have continued unabated. On Friday, the European Copernicus Climate Change Service confirmed that 2024 was the warmest year on record and the first full calendar year in which the average global temperature exceeded 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above its pre-industrial level. The year was also 0.12 degrees Celsius hotter than 2023, the previous warmest year on record.

The records Copernicus uses go back to 1850, and it uses the temperatures recorded from 1850-1900 as its baseline. Since then, the burning of fossil fuels—coal, oil and natural gas—has steadily increased the concentration of carbon dioxide in Earth’s atmosphere, causing a corresponding increase in the global average temperature.

The last 10 years have seen the sharpest of these temperature increases. The years 2015-2024 were the 10 warmest on record. Last year was the warmest year for all continents except Antarctica and Australia. It was also the warmest year in significant parts of the North Atlantic Ocean, the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific Ocean.

The sharp increase in the air temperature has also caused a temperature increase of 0.51 degrees Celsius in the equatorial and mid latitude oceans. The increase in ocean temperatures has in particular caused mass coral bleaching, which threatens both critical oceanic ecosystems, but the entire ecology of Earth as a cascading effect.

In Los Angeles, one impact of these higher temperatures has been an ongoing eight-month drought. Typically the region has a rainy season starting around November, which has yet to begin. As such, the city is currently suffering especially dry conditions which have fueled the ongoing fires.

The dangers posed by such a rapid increase of the global temperature are immense, as evidenced by the Los Angeles fires as well as the recent hurricanes Milton and Helene that ravaged the US Southeast late last year. These include longer heatwaves, more intense droughts, heavier rainfall, more powerful hurricanes and cyclones, larger wildfires, more severe storms, polar vortexes, coastal and tidal flooding and glacial and permafrost melting, all of which capitalism has proven incapable of abating, much less resolving.

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