

Portugal is Set to Become Europe's First Dry Desert

By Cillian Sheeran

Portugal is en route to become Europe's first dry desert. Blistering temperatures ranging from highs of 38 to 42 degrees Celsius forced the country into a serious state of drought. Samardã, Vila Real, Ourem and Boliqueme are only some of the towns and villages that have been affected by the raging blazes that struck Portugal this summer. This overwhelming heat allowed over 92,000 hectares of land to catch fire and burn.

Environment Minister, Duarte Cordeiro Serra da Estrela proposed the idea to 'temporarily suspend non-essential uses of water', namely for washing streets, watering green spaces, decorative fountains and in swimming pools. The great heat within the mainland saw a 20% decrease in 10 out of the 61 dams. Natural Park in Serra da Estrela experienced the destruction of 25,000 hectares of vegetation.

The European Commission has deployed two firefighting airplanes to aid Portugal in their attempts to put out the fires and make a full recovery. Over 10,000 emergency workers were sent to deal with the blazes yet at the same time 1,600 passengers were left stranded at railway stations due to railway line closure. Unfortunately, this is not the first time the Portuguese terrain has experienced such immense heat. In 2017, 66 people tragically lost their lives due to the 156 wild fires and many more were left injured. This tragedy led to the Interior Minister to resign to 'preserve her personal dignity'. This reoccurring problem the people of Portugal continues to face each summer needs to be addressed and something has to be done about it.

We all need to come together to try and lower our carbon foot print, whether that's by walking instead of driving or integrating solar panels into our homes. It is not possible to put our planet through anymore torture without causing permanent damage.

The Portuguese government is set to employ new drastic measures to ensure nothing like this ever happens again. Some of these new implications include, prohibiting access to certain forest spaces and banning the planting of flammable eucalyptus plants.