

Bolivia declares national emergency due to forest fires

By Reuters

September 8, 2024 10:07 AM GMT+12 Updated 9 hours ago



A general view of the city of La Paz covered by thick smoke from wildfires in Bolivia and neighboring Brazil, according to local authorities, in La Paz, Bolivia September 5, 2024.

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LA PAZ, Sept 7 (Reuters) - Bolivia declared a national emergency due to raging forest fires the country's defense ministry announced on Saturday.

In a press conference, defense minister Edmundo Novillo said the national emergency would allow the country to quickly coordinate international support.

"This will allow us to have more agile and effective support from friendly countries and from international cooperation," Novillo said.

Bolivia has seen the largest number of wildfires since 2010 with at least 3 million hectares (7.5 million acres) burned this year according to Inpe, Brazil's space research agency that monitors fires.

South America is in the throes of its peak fire season, that spans August and September, after an unusually early fire season started devastating the country in July following a drought.

Bolivia's firefighting forces are stretched thin and the government has called for international aid. Indigenous volunteers tried to protect land they use to grow crops and feed livestock near the Chiquitano forest north of Concepcion that extends towards Brazil and Paraguay, but some were forced to evacuate.

Brazil has also seen major blazes in cities and the Amazon rainforest is off to the worst start in two decades after a record drought.