

Tragedy in Chile

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By Guillermo Alvarado

The Chilean people are living these days the worst catastrophe suffered since the earthquake of February 2010, due to a series of forest fires in areas of the Valparaiso region that suddenly increased their power and devastated densely populated areas in four communes.

Sectors of Villa Alemana, Quilpué, Limache and some of the hills surrounding Viña del Mar look like war zones where nothing is left standing. Poor houses or solid buildings suffered the same fate and the streets are full of burnt vehicles after a literally hellish night from Friday to Saturday.

The flames persisted on Saturday while the calls to evacuate the risk areas multiplied and it was only on Sunday that some families managed to get to where they used to live in the hope of rescuing something, or finding that they had lost everything.

The picture is sad, there are more than 120 confirmed dead, but local authorities report some 300 missing. Everything is a struggle against time, even though this is not the only place affected by the fire, because 165 other fires are raging in 10 other regions of the country.

The blow was unexpected, and several experts warned about it months ago. Last year there were late rains that made the undergrowth grow over two meters and when the usual drought returned that material remained there, as ideal fuel for any spark.

Another factor is the undeniable global warming, an objective fact even though people like Javier Milei and Donald Trump insist on denying it.

Last week an unprecedented heat wave raised the thermometers above 37 degrees in the capital and its surroundings and the same happened in Valparaíso and other areas of Chilean territory. Add to that the hot, dry wind and low humidity levels, as well as the unfailing role of human action, and everything was ready for the tragedy that is shaking the country today.

If the experts agree on something, it is that almost all forest fires have man's hand as a common denominator, be it through ignorance, accident, distraction or malice. In other words, we are not only responsible for climate change due to the insane model of production and consumption that we practice, but we are also the ones who ultimately provoke and detonate the disasters that our fellow men pay so dearly for. We are the only species in nature that voluntarily destroy our common home, the planet.

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