

Southern Spain wildfire kills 12

Madrid: A wildfire roared through a remote expat community in southern Spain overnight, killing at least 12 people as victims tried to flee the flames in cars and on foot, authorities said on Friday. Eight people were injured and 23 missing, Andalusia's regional leader Juan Manuel Moreno said.

The blaze, one of Spain's deadliest wildfires, broke out late on Thursday in a semi-arid area near the Sierra de Los Filabres mountains in Almeria province, as the country has been dealing with soaring temperatures.

Most of the victims died after ignoring shelter-in-place instructions, said Antonio Sanz, head of Andalusia's emergency services. Some tried to escape via a dry riverbed that "turned into a death trap", he said.

Four victims were believed to be British nationals because



Smoke and flames rise amid a deadly wildfires in Almeria, Spain, on Friday. (Reuters)

the steering wheel of their burned-out car was on the right side, as with British vehicles, regional authorities said. Other unspecified nationals also were believed to be among the dead, and the death toll was expected to rise, authorities said.

Seven people died while on foot after abandoning their cars, Sanz said.

"The consequences have been terrible," Sanz said. He added: "Everything seems to indicate that, in the case of the deceased ... we are dealing for the most part, if not entirely,

with foreign nationals."

The fire was still burning as of Friday afternoon. Some 150 firefighters and 220 soldiers from Spain's military emergency unit were battling the blaze, which had consumed more than 31,970,166sqm of forest and farmland.

Moreno, the Andalusian regional leader, said containing the fire was difficult because of the steep, dry terrain.

"It consists mainly of scrubland and esparto grass," Moreno said. "Everything is extremely dry due to the heat waves, making it the perfect fuel; combined with the wind, it's a ticking time bomb."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez expressed his condolences. "Immense sadness and desolation in the face of the terrible consequences of the fire affecting the province of Almeria," he wrote on X.

AP