



SAMER HARDAN, the head of a firefighter station in Lebanon’s southeastern district, trudges through a soot-covered meadow.

# As temperatures and tensions soar, forests burn in Israel and Lebanon

The escalating war — and scorching heat — has sparked destructive fires

By NABIH BULOS

AITAROUN, Lebanon — It was only 10 a.m., but it had already been a long day for the firefighters in these borderlands of southern Lebanon.

They had barely finished containing a 130-acre forest fire when a call came in at 2 a.m. about a house in flames. Both blazes were caused by bombs from Israeli warplanes.

Now there were three teams, all scrambling one recent Thursday morning to deal with fires from Israeli strikes across the 15 villages and towns under their mandate.

“At this rate, we’ll have to get the reserve teams,” said Ali Qashaqish, 36, who heads field operations for one of the main fire stations in the southern district of Bint Jbeil.



A SHELL that appears to be white phosphorus from Israeli artillery explodes over a house in Al Bustan, a Lebanese village.

Summer always means fire in Lebanon’s bucolic south — and regular work for fire crews here among the fields and orchards of olives, almonds, pines, cherries, cherimoyas and avocados.

But the fire season this year has been fueled not only by scorching temperatures but also by fighting between the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and Israel. The combination has laid waste to thousands of acres of farmland on both sides of the border, displaced about 160,000 people and wrought heavy economic damage.

Hezbollah fired the first shots Oct. 8 — the day after the Hamas attack on southern Israel — in what it has described as a support campaign for Gaza. Since then, Hezbollah and Israel have traded strikes daily along the 62-mile-long [See **Scorched**, A4]

## Keeping workers safe as mercury climbs

Guidelines approved by California board require cooling areas and health monitoring in hot indoor settings.

By SUHAUNA HUSSAIN

Relief is on the horizon for California fast-food workers operating hot kitchen appliances, logistics workers in vast inland warehouses that lack cooling equipment and others laboring in hot indoor settings after a state agency approved new workplace protections against excessive heat.

A standards board at the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health voted unanimously to adopt safety measures that require employers to provide cooling areas and monitor workers for signs of heat illness when indoor workplace temperatures reach or surpass 82 degrees.

If temperatures climb to 87 degrees, or workers have to work near hot equipment, employers must take additional safety precautions by cooling the worksite, allocating more breaks, rotating out workers or making other adjustments.

Such guidelines are badly needed, experts say. The planet experienced its hottest year on record in 2023, and temperatures are expected to continue to rise in the years ahead, primarily due to climate change driven by fossil fuel emissions.

The new rules still must undergo a procedural legal review. If that review process is expedited the new rules could be in effect by late July or early August. Otherwise, they are likely to be in place by October.

“The road to get to the [See **Workers**, A10]

## Talent reps feel the pinch of TV, film slowdown

Hollywood agents and managers adapt by taking on consulting jobs and marketing their clients overseas.

By WENDY LEE

When David Neumann launched his New York talent management and production firm in 2020, work for his clients was plentiful.

Streamers rushed to green-light new series and films to bring more content to their services. There were so many new programs, viewers couldn’t keep up.

A few years later, the business has soured. Studios suspended many Hollywood productions during last summer’s writers’ and actors’ strikes, and work in film and TV hasn’t bounced back. Entertainment companies shed jobs, networks scaled back the number of new shows. Talent reps were

faced with more competition for fewer opportunities. And the threat of artificial intelligence has caused further anxiety for actors, creatives and the people tasked with getting them work.

The contraction has created a difficult environment for talent agents and managers, whose income depends on whether their clients land jobs. Neumann said revenue at his company, called Newmotion and based in Midtown Manhattan, is down 50% from 2022. If he had to come up with a movie title based on the current situation, he said, he already has one in mind: “My Fingers Are Slipping.”

“It has been a very unprecedented time where there has been overall slowness with the demand for content and production,” he said. “Buyers are commissioning far less. They’re buying less. There’s such a wave of insecurity across all areas of the industry.”

Talent agents are instructed [See **Hollywood**, A10]

## Did an L.A. man waste his 2nd chance?

Gascón policy let him avoid adult court. He’s charged in a new killing.

By RICHARD WINTON AND JAMES QUEALLY

Los Angeles County Dist. Atty. George Gascón’s reform-minded outlook on juvenile justice seemed made for someone like Denmon Lee.

When he was 16, Lee took part in an Antelope Valley gas station robbery that ended in the death of former Marine John Ruh. Lee, who was acquainted with the victim, had planned the 2018 robbery and provided a weapon to his co-defendant, according to court records. Although Lee wasn’t the shooter, he was charged with murder.

But when Gascón took office two years later, as



THE CASE has inspired critics to claim D.A. George Gascón’s policy is directly linked to a violent crime.

Lee’s case was making its way through the court system, he barred prosecutors from trying juveniles as adults. Lee was convicted and ordered held at the county’s Secure Youth Treatment Facility in Sylmar until he turned 25.

Lee “responded very well” to programs in custody, authorities said. Within a year, probation officials moved him from the high-security Sylmar facility into a rehabilitation-focused setting in Malibu. After being released to a halfway house last June, Lee enrolled in community college and found work at a local nonprofit.

And then, in April, he was arrested and charged with [See **Gascón**, A6]

**Hajj death toll surpasses 1,300**  
Saudi Arabia says most of the victims were unauthorized pilgrims who walked long distances in extreme heat. **WORLD, A3**

**Immigration key in several races**  
Down-ballot contests that may determine control of Congress could hinge on border policy. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

**Dodger driven by competitive fire**  
Since his Illinois youth, pitcher Bobby Miller has been guided by a mindset built on striving for perfection. **SPORTS, D1**

**Weather**  
Sunny and warm. L.A. Basin: 88/67. **B5**

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