

Floods cause death and destruction across Europe

Alejandro López
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Widespread flooding in Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria and Spain has left at least 25 people dead, dozens missing, many more injured and thousands displaced. The floods have destroyed whole bridges, washed away roads, burst dams and drifted cars into the sea.

The still unfolding catastrophe is yet another warning about the disastrous consequences of capitalist-induced climate change, coming just weeks after all the above countries suffered wildfires and amid a prolonged drought and record-high temperatures—forest fires continued in Greece this week.

In Greece, the death toll as of writing has risen to six since Storm Daniel hit early this week. Some regions received up to 800mm of rain in recent days—more than normally seen in a whole year. Greek daily *Ekathimerini* described how the storm had turned “the plain of Thessaly into a large lake.”

To put it in context, meteorologist George Tsatrafyllias said on X, formerly Twitter, that the volume of water that fell just in Pelion, Greece on Tuesday was equal to annual rainfall in London.

Athens saw flooded streets that turned part of a major avenue in the city centre into a river of mud.

In the coastal port city of Volos in Thessaly, a man died in his car and the local hospital was partly flooded. The floods partly destroyed a street, opening up a crater so large it swallowed a bus whole after the vehicle first collapsed on its side.

Andreas Diakodimitris, owner of a small-plates restaurant in Volos, told *The Guardian*, “Just as we said that is over, we’ll put it behind us, now this has happened. We had 10 days of breathing in smoke, then the [ammo depot] explosion, the unbearable heat ... It’s a given that this will keep happening, as long as people don’t respect the environment.”

In the space of two days, between September 5 and 6, the Greek Fire Service received 4,870 calls for assistance which included rescues, evacuations, pumping flooded homes and clearing fallen trees. In some cases, rescue efforts have been hampered by collapsed bridges and damaged roads. Nearly

1,800 people have had to be rescued, 100 of them airlifted, with many spending the whole day on their roofs.

In a press conference, the conservative New Democracy government’s Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Minister Vassilis Kikilias declared, “I know the word unprecedented has been used many times and it may not make an impression. But here even this word does not convey the severity of the phenomenon. We are talking about unimaginable amounts of water.”

But the floods have not come as a surprise to the authorities. Already in 2021, a team of 46 scientists warned of possible landslides and floods in Attica, the Peloponnese and Evia island—areas ravaged by summer wildfires.

According to the scientists, “The fires are expected to affect the hydro-geomorphological processes in the burned areas to a different degree, depending on local conditions and the intensity of the event”. The team’s report warned, “An increase in erosion and transport rates of sediments should be expected.” This in turn, it added, “will lead to an increase in the frequency of floods, material transport and landslides, for a period that cannot be clearly estimated but ranges from two to 15 years.”

Two years after these warnings, Greece has been struck by hundreds of wildfires this summer, with dozens of fires breaking out each day and leaving 28 dead.

In Turkey, thunderstorms, torrential rainfall and flash flooding also wreaked havoc, leaving at least 10 people dead. In Istanbul, Turkey’s largest city, heavy rain of up to 130 litres per square meter fell over a few hours, flooding streets and homes in at least two districts, Basaksehir and Kucukcekmece, and inundating subway stations and hospitals. This volume of rainfall is equal to what Istanbul would typically expect in September as a whole.

The floods come barely three weeks after Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu urged the city’s 16 million residents to save “every precious water drop flowing from the tap” to reduce their water consumption as major cities across the country grappled with a drought crisis and high temperatures.

Scientists have long shown how drought leaves regions more exposed to intense flooding as soil loses its ability to absorb water effectively.

In Bulgaria, deadly floods swept along its southern coast leaving at least four dead. Most of the rivers in the region burst their banks. The bodies of three people were found in a submerged car that was washed away from a bridge into the sea when the river overflowed. Several bridges were destroyed, causing serious traffic problems, and leaving more than 1,000 people stranded.

Videos on social media emerged showing cars and camper vans being swept out to sea in Tsarevo, a resort town.

In response, Bulgaria's Prime Minister Nikolay Denkov announced a pittance in financial aid of up to 770 euros for damaged houses and premises. This contrasts sharply to the announced purchase of \$1 billion of NATO weaponry, enabling the dispatch to Ukraine of 100 armoured vehicles, ammunition and Soviet S-300 anti-aircraft systems to assist in waging war against Russia on NATO's behalf. This, despite 70 percent of Bulgarians being against sending military aid to Kyiv.

On the other side of the Mediterranean, record levels of rain fell in Spain, leaving at least five people dead and major infrastructure destroyed, and causing disruption to air, rail and road transport.

Three of the deceased belonged to the Toledo region, one of the areas where there were torrential rains due to DANA, the Spanish acronym for an isolated high-level weather depression. The other dead were found in Huesca.

One woman in Aldea de Fresno, Madrid, told *Euronews*, "We felt the water running and we went down to see how the river was coming and at that moment the bridge fell. We all ran. After a while the other bridge fell, a huge noise. It was a moment of panic." The town saw three of its bridges collapse.

The Madrid regional government sent alert messages to millions of citizens to stay indoors, leading the local authorities to close train lines and cancel a La Liga football match (Atlético de Madrid-Sevilla).

Across Europe, floods are having an impact on supply chains. In Portugal, the Volkswagen Group was forced to stop production at its Autoeuropa plant in Setúbal (Portugal), which employs 5,000 autoworkers. This was due to the flooding of auto plants in Slovenia which provide car parts to the plant. Renault may stop production at its Valladolid plant in Spain for the same reasons.

The floods are part of the extreme weather patterns becoming more frequent and severe across the world. In recent months, floods have caused 62 deaths in northern China and wreaked havoc in Slovenia, Austria, South Korea, and the states of Vermont and New York in the US. At the

same time, massive wildfires raged in Maui in Hawaii, Canada, Spain and Greece.

While climate change and global warming are drastically changing weather patterns, capitalist governments have refused to take any serious action to mitigate the devastating impact of these widely predicted catastrophes or to provide adequate relief.

Billions of euros are necessary to strengthen structural flood mitigation measures, such as building or modifying infrastructures like dams, levees, bridges and culverts. Existing creeks and stormwater drainage systems must be properly maintained. In houses, measures such as solid fences, raised windows, doors sealed with "stop boards" and reflux or backflow valves limiting sewage contamination must be installed. Roads should be improved to allow residents to escape floods and ensure emergency service access.

Non-structural measures are also necessary, like surveys of flood prone areas or strategic land use planning to identify the extent of flood-impacted land and limit construction. Populations of millions of people continent-wide must have access to early warning systems and emergency plans, particularly as many floods occur at night.

Instead, the European capitalist powers are plundering their treasuries to spend billions of euros on NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine, upgrading their armed forces, and investing in preparations for World War Three—while granting major tax incentives and other giveaways to big business and the financial aristocracy.

The capitalist class, which organises society on the basis of profit accumulation, is organically incapable of the massive level of social planning and organization necessary to address the climate crisis. This task falls to the working class, which must take state power and end the profit system to implement socialist planning of the world's economic resources and the reorganisation of society on a rational basis.



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