

# Heatwaves: A sign of things to come?

## PARIS

**INTENSE** heatwaves, like the one which fuelled Greece's deadly wildfires, are set to become increasingly frequent around the world due to climate change, experts warn.

### **Is the current heatwave exceptional?**

Record high temperatures have been registered across the Northern Hemisphere in recent weeks, from Norway to Japan.

Sweltering summers are the norm in Greece, where at least 82 people have been killed in the country's worst ever forest fires.

But in Northern Europe the recent heatwave is exceptional, and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) predicts temperatures will continue to beat the seasonal average from Ireland to Scandinavia and the Baltic countries until early August.

This has been the hottest July for at least 250 years in Sweden, where indigenous Sami reindeer herders have been among those worst hit by an unprecedented drought as well as devastating

wildfires.

"Generally we have heatwaves in one part of the planet," said Anders Levermann, a professor at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. "But now we have the entire northern hemisphere being hot -- it's stunning."

### **Is climate change to blame?**

"Each individual event is very difficult to attribute directly to human activity," French climate expert Jean Jouzel told AFP.

But the soaring temperatures of recent weeks "are consistent with what we expect as a result of climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions", according to Elena Manaenkova, deputy secretary-general of the WMO.

A study published in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society concluded that global warming was solely responsible for worldwide record temperatures recorded in 2016.

Researchers from the World Weather Attribution Project estimates that climate change had made the current heatwave in Europe more than twice as likely to occur.

AFP