

German emergency services tackle massive forest fire

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FRANKFURT: Firefighters and aircraft Saturday ramped up efforts to tackle a massive forest fire in the mountains of central Germany that has reportedly forced the evacuation of hundreds of people.

Several blazes began in the Harz Mountains on Friday, and by the evening had joined together to form a huge forest fire.

Around 150 firefighters, planes and helicopters were deployed on the Brocken mountain and the surrounding area was closed off, according to authorities in the district of Harz in the state of Saxony-Anhalt.

But it was still raging on Saturday, and a plane and helicopter were sent out again to support firefighters, they said. Three more planes and another helicopter were expected to join the effort later.

"More aircraft have been requested... Firefighters on the ground are still trying to contain the flames," Harz authorities said in a Facebook post.

Hikers and tourists were urged to leave the area and local broadcaster NDR reported that 500 people were brought to safety off the mountain by bus on Friday afternoon.

A massive forest fire broke out in the Harz Mountains in September 2022. Authorities declared a state of emergency and hundreds of firefighters tackled the blaze for days.

Like other countries, Germany has been experiencing higher temperatures in summer in recent years.

This year has seen a season of heatwaves around the world that scientists said were intensified by human-driven climate change.