Forest fires: an anthropogenic environmental emergency

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Forest fires are presented as an environmental problem in which many factors influence and can compromise the socio-economic development of future generations. In Spain they have burned almost 2 million hectares in what we have of century. The year 2017 is considered the most tragic in history in Portugal, where more than 500,000 hectares have been burned and the lives of more than 100 people have been tragically lost. The current forest fire regime is likely to change due to its relation to the climate. The rainfall regime is also changing, with a decrease in water availability and an increase in periods of drought, heat waves and pests, especially in the Mediterranean countries. The scientific community starts talking about sixth-generation forest fires, linked to the effects of climate change on a continental scale. However, from a causal and social view of the problem, omitting the role of “human” (anthropogenic variables) in the probability of occurrence of forest fires would be to pose the problem in a partial way and would be exaggerating the protagonism granted to another type of factors of more difficult control. If we analyze the 16 most devastating forest fires in Spain in this century, we found that 87.50\% had their origin in the human factor (50\% intentional) and the other 12.50\% were caused by lightning. Climate change is part of a natural process of a living planet, although human pressure is perhaps altering and accelerating it. It is possible to take action and start working on a change of thought and attitude of the human being, restoring old customs, adapting them to the new times and thinking about the next generations.

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Biography
Psychologist and Environmental Consultant. Chief of Brigade in a Regional Forest Fire Service with more than 20 years of experience. He collaborates with several companies and institutions in the area of training in Psychology in Emergencies and Human Resources. He is Professor at the University of Valencia in the Master in “Intervention and Operational Coordination in Emergencies and Catastrophes” and other postgraduate courses on emergencies. Director and President of the International Scientific-Professional Committee of the National Symposium on Forest Fires (SINIF). He has lectured internationally and has been part of the Organizing Committee of several International Congresses on Earth Sciences and Climate Change. He is part of the Editorial Board of several international scientific journals. He has published articles on forest fires, stress, psychosocial risks and emotional trauma, mainly in relation to emergency services and natural disasters. Currently, he is assigned to the Research Group on “Climate and Territorial Planning” (University of Alicante), where he researches on the social perception of forest fire risk and behavior in the event of possible disasters.

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