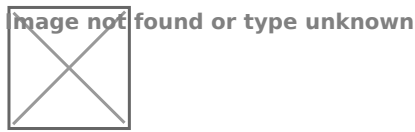


Konitsa wildfire enters 10th day, defying rain



Ten days after lightning struck the summit of Mount Trapezitsa above Konitsa in northwestern Greece, pockets of fire are still burning across the rugged mountain, including inside the Aoos Gorge, where the terrain has made reaching the flames exceptionally difficult.

“It made a deafening sound, and immediately smoke appeared from the top of the mountain,” Konitsa resident Kostas Nikolopoulos tells Kathimerini, recalling the lightning strike on August 31 that started the fire.

Rain the following day raised hopes that the blaze would burn itself out. Instead, it persisted and flared dramatically on 6 September, advancing toward the town.

The situation has since improved, but two active areas remained Wednesday, according to Tasos Kotsikos, president of the Konitsa Mountaineering Club, whose members have been working alongside firefighters.

One is on the western side facing Konitsa, where the fire continues to smolder in already burned terrain. Firefighters and mountaineers have established firebreaks there. The other is on the southeastern side, inside the Aoos Gorge, where ground crews have little chance of reaching the flames and helicopters are making repeated water drops.

“Most places on the gorge side are inaccessible,” Kotsikos said. Helicopters have been making repeated water drops there, but he acknowledged that nature may ultimately provide the solution. “We’re waiting for rain again, hoping it will put out the fire in the gorge.”

About 600 hectares have burned, including parts of the ecologically important Aoos Gorge and dense forest that had not burned since the 1940s. Active fires have also been recorded within a Natura 2000 protected area of Northern Pindos National Park.

Nikolopoulos said the lack of roads on Trapezitsa, where access is largely limited to trails, has complicated firefighting efforts. He also pointed to years of accumulated

dead vegetation and biomass, saying local officials had discussed clearing parts of the forest near Konitsa as far back as 2004.

“We were told that if this forest wasn’t cleared and the biomass removed, it would definitely burn one day,” he said. The proposed study and intervention, he said, never materialized.

Forestry professor Ioannis Gitas said some of the blaze is a slow-moving ground fire, feeding on dry leaves, pine needles, branches and other dead vegetation rather than consuming the trees themselves.

“This is what we call a creeping fire,” Gitas said, noting that similar behavior was observed during the massive Evros wildfire in 2023.

The true ecological toll will only become clear once the fire is fully extinguished and experts can reach the affected areas. Trapezitsa contains a diverse mix of pine, fir, beech, oak and other deciduous species, meaning the damage could vary considerably across the mountain.

[vema.com.au](https://www.vema.com.au)