**[The heat is on](https://www.dawn.com/news/1781738/the-heat-is-on)**

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IT was a hot one. In fact, climate scientists who study Earth’s temperature have found that September 2023 was perhaps the hottest September ever recorded.

According to *The Washington Post*, the scientists’ early analysis revealed that global temperatures surged last month by over half a degree Celsius. While scientists have long known and forecast Earth’s rising temperature, the fact that it rose so much in just one month suggests what most of us are already aware of: that the various governments and transnational organisations pretending to grapple with climate change will not be able to stop it.

Given this most recent rise, Earth is now 1.7°C to 1.8°C warmer than it was prior to the Industrial Revolution. Copernicus — the European Union’s Earth Observation Programme — is predicting that the average temperature this year will ultimately be 1.4°C warmer than before industrialisation, shattering records that are thousands of years old.

In addition to global warming by the rampant and unchecked use of fossil fuels, the [El Niño weather system](https://www.dawn.com/news/1739882) is also putting pressure on the climate. *The Post* points out that besides global warming induced by the greenhouse effect, El Niño is adding to the temperature increase.

It is difficult not to feel a sense of gloom and foreboding over this worsening state of affairs that has already unleashed catastrophic weather events all over the world. Pakistan is still reeling from the after-effects of the floods that devastated the country last year, while other states are dealing with hurricanes, storms, and avalanches.

Major cities around the world have experienced sharp increases in temperatures, some exceeding beyond 10 per cent.

One of the highest temperature increases was seen in the Turkish capital of Ankara whose temperature was reported to have increased by 18.2 per cent since 2019. The average temperature in that city has increased from 22.4°C to 26.4°C. Temperatures in Athens and Seoul have similarly witnessed significant increases.

The numbers overall are forbidding and frightening. Not only do they show that the climate catastrophe is truly entrenched, but they also reveal another dark truth: the fact that governments in places such Seoul or Ankara or in any of the other much hotter cities have been completely ineffectual in pushing any proposal that can receive even a basic level of global acceptance.

Translated, this means that the world is quite literally turning into a hot and messy hellscape and those who could stop it have utterly failed to do so. Considered against the backdrop of this situation, the entire series of COP summits seems a ridiculous waste of time. To the extent that countries are willing to commit to reducing emissions — in whatever way they promise — it is obviously too late and not enough.

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If temperatures continue to increase by 1°C or more above the current levels, billions of people largely in the Middle East and South Asia will find themselves living in areas where the temperature will be too high for humans to survive.

According to a study published in the journal of the National Academy of Sciences, there is already plenty of evidence of heatwaves lasting longer, being more intense and causing difficult health conditions even among the young and healthy.

The hot September of 2023 has already produced temperatures that exceed the Paris Agreement target of keeping the increase below 1.5°C. This has much to do with emissions continuing their wild unchecked trajectory. If this goes on, the outcome will be unlivable bands of extreme heat in North and South America.

It has been forecast that the US will have an extreme heat belt stretching from Texas to Illinois where average temperatures could cross 50°C. So far, there are few everyday measures being put in place in any of these regions to curb the use of fossil fuels; many do not even believe in the proven science behind global warming.

It is difficult to ignore the fact that the same inability to reach consensus undergirds intractable conflicts such as the [Israel-Palestine clash](https://www.dawn.com/news/1781720/inhumane-israel-kills-hundreds-in-strike-on-gaza-hospital). These are the same forces that prevent meaningful action on the climate calamity. In a sense, the division of the world into nation-states seems to have set it on the course of self-destruction.

Nationalisms preach progress at every cost, but Pakistanis breathe in the polluted air that blows towards them from India. With so many nation-states that imagine their interests and responsibilities to be ending at their borders, the collective responsibility for ensuring Earth’s habitability is elusive thus sealing the planet’s fate. No one will have to wait to go to hell as most will be in hell right here on Earth.

Times like these encourage dark thoughts and predictions of the end of days. The most frightening thing about these is that some of the people who peddle them seem actually invested in hastening a calamitous ‘Day of Judgement’.

Evangelical Christians from the US have been gleefully watching the cataclysm in Gaza because they believe it to be a sign of the end times. Proponents of this idea include none other than former US vice president Mike Pence. This dangerous lot is so confident of this idea of the end times that rabid wars and the transformation of Earth into a living hell seem to them par for the course.

The sheer excess of the catastrophe that prevails across the world makes our present an eerie and unpredictable moment. One cannot help but stop and wonder whether our parents or grandparents ever saw such an excess of chaos and tumult.

Surely, we cannot be the first ones to stand frozen before the collapse all around us. Science seems to suggest that we very well might be the first, and by dint of that truth are, very unfortunately, cursed.

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