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## **"When the World Burns: The Role of Journalism in Reporting Wildfires and Environmental Justice"**

### **Introduction**

Wildfires are one of the most dangerous natural disasters. The raging flames can harm humans, animals and the environment. Due to its dry climate, strong westerly winds and high temperatures in recent years Los Angeles has become more and more susceptible to forest fires. Strong wind combined with no rain means fires burn furiously. Homes, forests and animals are all in harm's way. Moreover, the smoke from the fires goes out into people's home areas and new European cities. Many families are displaced, homes may be lost for decades and nature destroyed. Because of this series of damage in society it is necessary to understand what started them in order for earth's inhabitants to find safer ways of living on this planet.

### **Significance**

The Los Angeles wildfires are natural disasters that are already harmful and threatening the Los Angeles area. They have a variety of impacts. There are many reasons for their formation

and they cause great suffering. In January 2025, the Palisades Fire in Los Angeles broke out again. This is an example of the violent nature of the fire. Severe drought and fierce winds made the conditions in Los Angeles more conducive to the spread of fire, although more difficult to control. Wildfires are the bane of everyone's existence because they not only destroy large areas of forests, but also destroy ecosystems and cause long-term environmental damage. In addition, the toxic smoke produced by wildfires can cause serious health problems for people. Worse, wildfires can destroy homes and crops on a large scale. This leads to huge economic losses and the evacuation of many Los Angeles residents from their land in a short period of time. They also damage water resources, which is an issue that should be taken seriously on a global scale. As reported by China Daily, "The Palisades Fire has burned more than 24,000 acres and is currently 25% contained, while the Eaton Fire has burned about 15,000 acres and has been brought to 45% contained" (Li).

### **Context**

In recent years, the weather and continued drought have had extremely severe impacts, and the Los Angeles wildfires have been particularly serious. In addition, strong winds have made it more difficult to control the fire, and the fire has spread rapidly and caused greater destructive power. According to *The New York Times*, "A ninth person is believed to have died in the Palisades fire, according to the Los Angeles County medical examiner's office. The office also determined that one set of remains in the Eaton fire was not human remains, so the death toll of that fire is 16. The overall death toll remains 25." highlighting the dangerous impact of these natural disasters on human life and property (NYTimes). While wildfires are often seen as purely destructive, they also play an important role in nature. As Pausas and Keeley mention in their research, "Wildfires are a globally important and integral part of many ecosystems, playing key

roles in ecosystem dynamics and the retention of species that have evolved in response to fire” (Pausas and Keeley 289). **This suggests that, despite the damage they cause, wildfires also help maintain biodiversity and ecological balance. Understanding the context of wildfires helps us appreciate their risks and natural role, and develop better prevention strategies.**

### **Defending the thesis**

Wildfires in Los Angeles cause devastating harm to people, communities, and the environment, making it essential to understand why they happen and how they impact our lives. These fires spread so quickly because of the dangerous mix of drought, strong winds, and rising temperatures. Without better fire prevention and management, wildfires will continue to put lives at risk and destroy entire neighborhoods. The financial toll of wildfires is overwhelming. They destroy homes, businesses, and farms, leaving behind billions of dollars in damage. Families are often forced to evacuate with little time to prepare, and many lose everything they own. The cost of rebuilding is incredibly high, creating financial stress for both individuals and the government. Wildfires also hurt local economies by damaging farmland and industries that depend on natural resources. Wildfires elicit devastation upon wildlife, incinerating the environments animals call home and placing innumerable creatures in peril. **When flames spread with ferocity, many fauna are compelled to flee in search of shelter, but numerous never escape the scorching heat, suffocating smoke, and rapidly advancing front, perishing in the exodus.** Those managing to vacate may struggle to find sustenance, water, and refuge in the charred landscape, potentially leading to emaciation and dispersion. Though wildfires are an inherent part of certain ecosystems, anthropogenic ignitions exacerbate the problem. Increased frequency and intensity of wildfires afford less time for animals to recuperate, pushing some varieties closer to full eradication. Safeguarding wildlife from the dangers of wildfires necessitates improved fire

deterrence strategies, habitat conservation efforts, and endeavors to moderate climatic variation, which exacerbates the ferocity of wildfires. Long-term exposure to wildfire smoke can lead to lasting health problems, increasing the need for medical care and public health support. As The Mainichi reported, Los Angeles has been facing heightened wildfire risks, with residents preparing for worsening fire conditions and air quality concerns “with residents urged to take steps to get ready to evacuate such as creating an emergency kit and keeping cars filled with at least a half tank of gas.” (The Mainichi). Beyond their immediate destruction, wildfires contribute to climate change by releasing large amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. According to Pausas and Keeley, "Climate change increases the frequency with which some of these thresholds are crossed, extending the duration of the fire season and increasing the frequency of dry years." (Pausas and Keeley 388). **This means that wildfires not only worsen due to climate change but also accelerate its effects, creating a dangerous cycle. Addressing wildfires requires stronger policies, better fire prevention measures, and increased public awareness. By taking action, we can reduce the devastating impact of wildfires and protect both people and the environment.**

### **Counterargument**

Some believe wildfires are natural, clearing plants, space grows. Animals, plants even depend on fire to survive. Wildfires always existed, trying to stop completely unnecessary thought.

However, today's wildfires are worsening human activities, climate change. Instead small, natural fires see huge fast-spreading destroy homes, force leave, and pollute thick smoke. Fires are no longer a natural environment—serious problems harm people, animals, and the planet.

Thus need better prevention, control, rather than just burning. Replacing dry undergrowth with moisture-holding foliage could help, as could controlled burns under close supervision when

conditions are least risky, but more work remains. Precautions critical with burning are banned almost everywhere.

## **Conclusion**

Wildfires have become a serious global issue, causing destruction to homes, harming the environment, and threatening people's health. As climate change worsens, these fires are becoming more frequent and severe, forcing many families to evacuate and leaving lasting economic and environmental damage. While some argue that wildfires are a natural part of the ecosystem, the reality is that human activities and extreme weather conditions have made them far more dangerous than before. It is essential to take action by improving wildfire prevention, emergency responses, and policies to protect communities and nature.

As stated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” (UDHR, Article 3). Wildfires put these fundamental rights at risk by endangering lives and displacing thousands of people. To uphold these rights, governments, communities, and individuals must work together to find better solutions for preventing and managing wildfires.

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