Change is (literally) in the air. For the U.S., last year broke heat records. “2012, the year of a surreal March heat wave, a severe drought in the Corn Belt and a huge storm that caused broad devastation in the Middle Atlantic States, turns out to have been the hottest year ever recorded in the contiguous United States.” (NY TImes). This probably won’t be true globally, however, because it was a La Niña year, but it’s still likely to be in the top ten warmest years recorded. The *Times* also observes that “nobody who is under 28 has lived through a month of global temperatures that fell below the 20th-century average, because the last such month was February 1985.”

It’s not just the temperatures that are out of whack. And it’s not just the U.S. Due to the heat wave, a drought covered almost two-thirds of the country. The *Times* ran another story about a spate of recent extreme weather events. Here’s a photo of an unusual sight: a snowstorm in Jerusalem.

In fact, the weather has been exceptionally bad in a lot of places:

> *China is enduring its coldest winter in nearly 30 years. Brazil is in the grip of a dreadful heat spell. Eastern Russia is so freezing — minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit, and counting — that the traffic lights recently stopped working in the city of Yakutsk.*
>
> *Bush fires are raging across Australia, fueled by a record-shattering heat wave. Pakistan was inundated by unexpected flooding in September.*

Extreme weather events have multiple causes, but there are grounds for thinking that climate change has increased their frequency:

> *“Each year we have extreme weather, but it’s unusual to have so many extreme events around the world at once,” said Omar Baddour, chief of the data management applications division at the World Meteorological Organization, in Geneva. “. .. Such events are increasing in intensity as well as frequency, Mr. Baddour said, a sign that climate change is not just about rising temperatures, but also about intense, unpleasant, anomalous weather of all kinds.*

More next time about predictions for the United States.