

Sharp rise of Ebola cases in western Sierra Leone

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The number of people infected with Ebola in western Sierra Leone is rising sharply, with government estimates placing the number of deaths in the region at 20 a day. The rate of deaths is so high that removal of bodies is reportedly a problem for health workers and authorities.

On Monday alone, 49 confirmed cases of Ebola emerged in two zones in and around the capital Freetown, according to Sierra Leone's National Ebola Response Center (NERC).

There are now 851 confirmed cases of Ebola in the two western zones, named Western Area Urban and Western Area Rural, the NERC said. Authorities believe the movement of people from the interior regions of the country to Waterloo, near Freetown, has fueled the spike of Ebola in these two zones.

There have been a total of 1,012 cases in the eastern districts of Kenema and Kailahun since the outbreak began, with no new cases reported on Monday. Margaret Harris, the World Health Organization's (WHO's) spokeswoman in Sierra Leone, said it was too early to say that the epidemic had been beaten in these districts.

Claude Kamanda, a lawmaker in the western area, told the local *Politico* newspaper that authorities are facing difficulties collecting corpses from both quarantined and non-quarantined homes. The timely collection of highly infectious corpses is key in containing the spread of the deadly virus.

Last week, President Ernest Bai Koroma appointed Defense Minister Alfred Palo Conteh as the CEO of the NERC. The center's headquarters are being set up at the former War Crime Tribunal in the west end of Freetown, along with the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response.

There have been calls for authorities to quarantine

Waterloo. The *Exclusive* newspaper wrote Tuesday, "The growing fear has left the public with no choice but to call on the Government for Waterloo to be quarantined as was done to other places including Kailahun, Kenema, Bombali, Port Loko and Mayamba districts." The World Food Program delivered food rations to people in Waterloo over the weekend.

With the number of cases mounting, there is an urgent need for more laboratories and treatment centers. Health workers have also faced difficulties bringing Ebola patients to clinics and hospitals for treatment. A meeting of international health officials last week voted in favor treating people in their homes, providing them with painkillers, protective gloves and rehydration fluid.

Koroma announced that a piece of land earmarked for a new Sierra Leone National Olympic Committee would likely be the site of new emergency hospital for Ebola patients. The president said negotiations on the land, located in Goderich, an affluent suburb of the capital, would begin immediately.

The WHO warned last week that as many as 10,000 new cases of Ebola a week could develop by December 1 in the three hardest-hit West African countries, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Nearly 10,000 people have contracted the disease and more than 4,500 people have died, the WHO said.

The response of the US and Western European countries to this humanitarian disaster has been dismal, with the WHO reporting that it has received only \$100,000 in donations from world governments out of \$20 million pledged. This compares to the \$1 billion the agency says is immediately required for emergency operations in West Africa to fight the Ebola epidemic.

Britain has responded to the outbreak in Sierra Leone by dispatching its military to its former colony. The US

has initiated similar measures, with both imperialist powers seeking to augment their position on the resource-rich continent. The UK is deploying a total of 750 military personnel, including the navy's RFA Argus. The ship saw duty in the Malvinas War and served as a primary casualty receiving ship (PCRS) during the first Gulf War.

Justine Greening, the UK's international development secretary, was due to fly out Tuesday for Sierra Leone with about 100 soldiers from the 35 Squadron, 5 Armoured Medical Regiment and Royal Army Medical Corps. The troops will run an Ebola training academy alongside personnel of the 22 Field Hospital who are already in Sierra Leone.



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