

# Haiti's cholera death toll grows, fueling riots

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A child suffering cholera symptoms is checked by a doctor at the Doctors Without Borders temporary hospital in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Tuesday Nov. 16, 2010. Thousands of people have been hospitalized for cholera across Haiti with symptoms including serious diarrhea, vomiting and fever and hundreds have died. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

(AP) -- An outbreak of cholera has killed more than 1,000 people, the Haitian government said Tuesday as it sent top officials to the country's north in hopes of quelling violent protests against U.N. peacekeepers accused of spreading the disease.

Haiti's police chief, the health minister and other Cabinet officials headed to Cap-Haitien, the country's second largest city, where protesters erected barricades of flaming tires and other debris and clashed with U.N. troops. At least two demonstrators died, one of them shot by a member of the multinational peacekeeping force that has been trying to keep order since 2004.

The [cholera outbreak](#) that began last month has brought increased misery to the entire country, still struggling with the aftermath of last January's earthquake. But anger has been particularly acute in the north, where the infection is newer, health care sparse and people have died at more than twice the rate of the region where the epidemic was first noticed.

The health ministry said Tuesday that the official death toll hit 1,034 as of Sunday. Figures are released following two days of review.

[Aid workers](#) say the official numbers may understate the epidemic. While the ministry of health says more than 16,700 people have been hospitalized nationwide, Doctors Without Borders reports that its clinics alone have treated at least 16,500.

On Tuesday, during a second day of rioting throughout northern Haiti, local reporters said a police station was burned in Cap-Haitien and rocks thrown at peacekeeping bases. A small protest was also reported in the northwestern city of Gonaives, but U.N. police said it ended peacefully.

In the town of Limbe, west of Cap-Haitien, the unrest carried through the night Monday as screams and chants filled the streets, said Beth Macy, a reporter for The Roanoke Times who accompanied a Virginia medical mission to Haiti. The group hunkered down in the hospital as protesters pelted the gate with stones, she said in a newspaper blog post.

The violence has combined some Haitians' long-standing resentment of the 12,000-member U.N. military mission with the internationally shared suspicion that the U.N. base could have been a source of the infection.

Health experts have called for an independent investigation into whether Nepalese peacekeepers introduced the South Asian strain of [cholera](#) to Haiti, where no case of cholera had ever been documented before late October.

The U.N. denies responsibility, and a mission spokesman said the protests were politically motivated. Haiti's national elections are scheduled for Nov. 28.

Cholera is transmitted by feces and can be all but prevented if people have access to safe drinking water and regularly wash their hands.

But sanitary conditions don't exist in much of [Haiti](#), and the disease has spread across the countryside and to nearly all the country's major population centers, including the capital, Port-au-Prince. There are concerns it could eventually sicken hundreds of thousands of people.

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