

Cholera outbreak in northern Mali kills two

July 5 2012

Two people have died and 26 others have been infected by an outbreak of cholera in the city of Gao, northern Mali, a region occupied by hardline Islamist groups, officials told AFP on Wednesday.

"Yesterday we counted 27 cases of cholera, including two deaths. This morning we had one case," said Ibrahima Maiga, a [health official](#) from Gao hospital.

The disease has broken out in Wabaria, a southwestern suburb of Gao on the Niger river.

"We have sent someone to Wabaria today to see the cholera cases" and determine what help is needed, said Almahdi Cisse, the president of a local NGO which is helping to bring [humanitarian aid](#) to Malians in the area.

According to one young Gao resident, the local ruling Movement for Oneness and Jihad in [West Africa](#) (MUJAO) has told people not to drink the [river water](#) or bathe in it in a bid to contain the outbreak.

Fear of the disease spreading only adds to the problems currently facing Mali's desert north, which has been controlled for the last three months by Islamist groups allied to Al-Qaeda after a March coup that toppled the country's elected president.

Chaos and unrest have ensued in the fabled city of Timbuktu where the Ansar Dine group has in recent days run rampage, smashing seven tombs

of ancient Muslim saints.

The destruction prompted widespread condemnation abroad and led UN cultural body UNESCO to class the city as an endangered [world heritage site](#).

Meanwhile in Gao, Ansar Dine's Al-Qaeda allies have planted landmines around the city to prevent a counter-offensive by the Tuareg fighters they violently expelled last week.

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