

Sierra Leone cholera epidemic claims 255 lives, says UN

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The cholera epidemic in Sierra Leone, the worst outbreak of the waterborne disease there in 15 years, has now claimed 255 lives, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Tuesday.

The epidemic was declared a national emergency in mid-August, with the densely populated capital Freetown the worst affected area in the west African country.

WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic said that as of September 5, a total of 16,360 cases have been reported, including 255 deaths.

"The western area of the country, where the capital city of Freetown is located, reported more than 60 percent of all new cases," he added.

Despite expectations that the number of cases will rise to around 32,000 during September as the rainy season peaks, the WHO has not recommended any travel or trade restrictions be applied to Sierra Leone.

The UN agency has set up a major cholera command centre in Freetown and is also working with other non-government organisations including UNICEF, Oxfam and Save the Children to scale up their aid effort.

With emphasis placed on early detection of the disease, public meetings are being held in Freetown to raise awareness of the importance of avoiding drinking water from unprotected sources, and text messages are also being sent by telephone companies to inform the public.

The disease, which is linked to [poor hygiene](#) and living conditions, causes vomiting, diarrhoea and [stomach cramps](#).

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