

UN launches polio vaccination campaign in Mideast

November 9 2013

The United Nations says a massive campaign to vaccinate children in the Middle East against polio has begun after the first cases in 14 years were confirmed in northeastern Syria last week.

The U.N. children's fund said Friday that Red Crescent and government health workers in Syria and neighboring countries aim to immunize 20 million children.

UNICEF says 10 children have so far been paralyzed by the virus and it poses a risk to hundreds of thousands of children across the region.

It says preliminary evidence indicates that the strain in Syria is of Pakistani origin and is similar to one found in sewage samples in Egypt, Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Polio has been eradicated in most countries but remains endemic in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria.

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