

Nurses go on strike in Ebola-hit Liberia

September 2 2014

Nurses at Liberia's largest hospital went on strike on Monday, demanding better pay and equipment to protect them against a deadly Ebola epidemic which has killed hundreds in the west African nation.

John Tugbeh, spokesman for the strikers at Monrovia's John F Kennedy hospital, said the nurses would not return to work until they are supplied with "[personal protective equipment](#) (PPEs)", the hazmat-style suits which guard against infectious diseases.

"From the beginning of the Ebola outbreak we have not had any protective equipment to work with. As result, so many doctors got infected by the virus. We have to stay home until we get the PPEs," he said.

The Ebola virus, transmitted through contact with infected bodily fluids, has killed more than 1,500 people in four countries since the start of the year—almost 700 of them in Liberia.

A high proportion of the deaths—almost a tenth—have been among [health workers](#) and the World Health Organization has warned that the outbreak is set to get a lot worse, predicting up to 20,000 cases before it is brought under control.

The surgical section at JFK is the only trauma referral centre in Liberia and a long-term dispute would severely damage the country's capability to respond to the Ebola crisis.

The hospital closed temporarily in July over the infections and deaths of an unspecified number of health workers who had been treating Ebola patients.

"We need proper equipment to work with (and) we need better pay because we are going to risk our lives," Tueh said.

It was not immediately clear how large the striking group was, or what contingency plans were in place at the hospital, which has not made a statement on the action.

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