

Ebola cases rise sharply in western Sierra Leone

October 21 2014, by Clarence Roy-Macaulay

After emerging months ago in eastern Sierra Leone, Ebola is now hitting the western edges of the country where the capital is located with dozens of people falling sick each day, the government said Tuesday. So many people are dying that removing bodies is reportedly a problem.

Forty-nine confirmed cases of Ebola emerged in just one day, Monday, in two Ebola zones in and around the capital, the National Ebola Response Center, or NERC, said. Lawmaker Claude Kamanda who represents a western area said more than 20 deaths are being reported daily.

Kamanda told the local Politico newspaper that authorities are experiencing challenges collecting corpses from both quarantined and non-quarantined homes.

Authorities say the uncontrolled movement of people from the interior to Waterloo which is the gateway to Freetown, the capital, has fueled the increase of Ebola cases in the west. There is a strong feeling that people are violating the quarantines elsewhere and coming to Freetown through Waterloo.

There are 851 total confirmed Ebola cases in the two zones, called Western Area Urban and Western Area Rural, the NERC said. In numbers of cases, they may soon surpass a former epicenter of the outbreak in the country, the eastern districts of Kenema and Kailahun where there have been a total of 1,012 confirmed cases.

No new cases were reported Monday in Kenema and Kailahun but a World Health Organization spokeswoman said it is too early to declare that the epidemic has burned itself out in the east.

"There was a drop in new cases in Kenema and Kailahun and fingers were crossed but there has been a bit of a flare up thanks to a couple of unsafe burials," said Margaret Harris, WHO's spokeswoman in Sierra Leone. "So it's too early to say we have a real decline ... definitely too early to say it's been beaten there."

A local newspaper suggested Tuesday that authorities quarantine Waterloo. The World Food Program over the weekend delivered emergency food rations to people there.

"The growing fear has left the public with no choice but to call on the Government for Waterloo to be quarantined as was done to other places including Kailahun, Kenema, Bombali, Port Loko and Moyamba Districts," the Exclusive newspaper said.

Many residents of the capital note that Ebola has followed the same route across the country as rebels who in 1991 started a savage war in Kailahun district. The war ended in Freetown a decade later where the final battle was fought. Now the enemy is a disease, and the president is putting in place a more military-style response.

President Ernest Bai Koroma last week appointed Defense Minister Alfred Palo Conteh as CEO of the National Ebola Response Center, whose headquarters are being placed at the former War Crimes Tribunal for Sierra Leone in the west end of Freetown together with the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response.

The west African nations of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea—where the outbreak first emerged 10 months ago—have been hit hard by Ebola

with more than 4,500 deaths, according to WHO estimates. A few cases have also emerged in the United States and Spain, and on Tuesday the east African nation of Rwanda was singling out travelers from the U.S. and Spain for special screening. A Rwandan Ministry of Health document says all passengers from the U.S. and Spain will have their temperatures taken upon arrival. If the passenger has a fever he or she is denied entry. If there is no fever, the visitors still must report their health condition daily to authorities.

The U.S. Embassy in Rwanda on Tuesday urged Americans who may have a fever or who have traveled to Ebola countries "to weigh carefully whether travel to Rwanda at this time is prudent."

"Please note neither the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs nor the U.S. Embassy have authority over quarantine issues and cannot prevent a U.S. citizen from being quarantined should local health authorities require it," the embassy said.

No Ebola [cases](#) have emerged in Rwanda.

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