

Haiti's cholera epidemic still emergency: UN envoy

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Haiti's cholera epidemic is still an emergency and a let up in response based on the decreasing number of cases could have "tragic consequences," a UN special envoy said Wednesday.

"I fear that the enormous progress we have made leads people to believe that the problem has been resolved. It is not resolved," Pedro Medrano, the UN coordinator overseeing cholera response in Haiti, told AFP in Washington.

Between January and August of 2014, only 8,600 cases were recorded, in stark contrast with the 200,000 documented last year, Medrano said.

"That's still an [emergency situation](#)," the Chilean diplomat said, adding that any belief otherwise "is not only an error but could have tragic consequences."

The UN's role in the cholera epidemic has been controversial.

The disease had not existed in Haiti for at least 150 years until it was allegedly introduced by Nepalese UN peacekeepers sent there in the wake of the devastating January 2010 earthquake.

The source of the cholera epidemic was traced to a river that runs next to a UN camp in the central town of Mirebalais, where Nepalese troops had been based.

The strain of cholera is the same as one endemic in Nepal.

But the United Nations has refused to recognize responsibility for the outbreak, arguing it is impossible to determine its origin, even as lawsuits have been filed in US courts.

Since the beginning of the [cholera epidemic](#) in 2010 through March 2013, approximately 700,000 people have become ill, of whom more than 8,500 have died.

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