

# Liberia eases up on cremation order for Ebola victims

December 30 2014, by Jonathan Paye-Layleh

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Liberia's government announced Tuesday that it will allow families to bury Ebola victims in a special plot of land instead of requiring that the bodies be cremated so as not to spread the virus blamed for killing nearly 8,000 people across West Africa this year.

Ciatta Bishop, head of the national Ebola burial team, said the government has secured a 25-acre parcel of land where Ebola victims can now be laid to rest. More than 2,000 corpses of suspected Ebola victims had been cremated after the decree was ordered at the height of the crisis in Liberia several months ago.

The corpses of Ebola [victims](#) are highly contagious, and many of those who washed or touched bodies before their burials contracted the disease.

Bishop warned the public that in returning to normal burials "we have to be careful now" so that the process does not lead to a flare-up in Ebola cases.

"They just must not touch bodies otherwise than that we will have problems again and the number (of Ebola cases) will rise," Bishop said.

The cremation decree is highly unpopular in Liberia, where funeral traditions are carefully followed and are considered a sacred obligation to the deceased. Many families have tried to secretly bury their relatives' bodies to avoid them being taken away by burial teams to face

cremation.

Liberia has recorded the highest number of deaths—more than 3,400—though the number of cases is now highest in neighboring Sierra Leone. More than 9,400 people have become sick there, about 2,700 of whom have died.

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