

Red Cross urges Ebola vigilance before Christmas

December 11 2014

The Red Cross on Thursday urged vigilance against a possible spread of the Ebola virus as holiday travel picks up for the Christmas season in west Africa.

"There may be a risk of waves of infection if not all the measures are taken," Elhadj As Sy, head of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), told reporters in London.

"It is a combination of (a) festive season where we have a high mobility of people and also a high risk of, you know, letting your guard down and not being vigilant."

"It is an alert for greater vigilance," he said, adding: "Our best bet right now is to count on behaviours, attitudes, community mobilisation, treatment, safe and dignified burials".

The IFRC chief also recognised the apparent "plateauing" of Ebola infection and signs it is declining in some places, but warned that this should "not be a reason for complacency".

IFRC currently has around 11,000 volunteers in the three countries worst hit by the Ebola epidemic—Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Red Cross volunteers work mostly on burying victims and transporting patients to clinics.

The epidemic has killed 6,388 people so far out of a total of 17,942 recorded cases in eight countries, the World Health Organisation said on Wednesday.

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Citation: Red Cross urges Ebola vigilance before Christmas (2014, December 11) retrieved 24 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-12-red-urges-ebola-vigilance-christmas.html>

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