

Sierra Leonean docs strike again over Ebola care

December 10 2014, by Clarence Roy-Macaulay



In this file photo taken on Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2014, health workers wear protective gear before entering the house of a person suspected to have died of the Ebola virus in Port Loko Community situated on the outskirts of Freetown, Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone's junior doctors were on strike for a second day Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2014, to demand better care for medical workers who catch Ebola after a spate of recent deaths. (AP Photo/Michael Duff, File)

Sierra Leone's junior doctors went on strike for a second day Tuesday, a

move they dubbed a "tactical retreat" to demand better care for medical workers who catch Ebola after a spate of deaths.

The Ebola outbreak has infected more than 17,800 people, most in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

Hundreds of [health workers](#) have become sick, but the problem in Sierra Leone has been getting special attention. On Tuesday, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a study that found the rate of lab-confirmed Ebola infections this year has been 100 times higher in [medical workers](#) in Sierra Leone than in other adults.

The study cited a broad range of breaches in infection control and prevention practices. But it said that in recent months more training and availability of protective equipment may be helping.

Sierra Leone lost three doctors in the past week, prompting a strike of the junior doctors' association that started Monday.

In a statement Tuesday, the doctors demanded a facility dedicated to the [treatment](#) of medical workers. They had previously demanded access to life-saving equipment, like dialysis machines.

The deaths of doctors "might have been as a result of the absence of a specialized unit," the statement said. It didn't use the word strike but said the junior doctors would "re-strategize" while awaiting the special treatment unit.

"This strategy can be compared to the 'tactical retreat' of soldiers in the warfront ... in order to protect the lives of other soldiers," it said.

Just such a facility opened in Sierra Leone last month—as part of a British-built treatment center at Kerry Town, but that treatment center

has come under criticism lately, including confusion over who the clinic for health workers is open to. Officials clarified Monday that any infected front-line health worker could be admitted there.

Still, Dr. Jeredine George, president of the [junior doctors'](#) association, said Tuesday that the government has also promised that beds will be set aside for health workers at another treatment unit.

Also on Tuesday, the United Nations' Ebola chief announced that enough medics will be operating in the country by the end of January to ensure that the number of new cases starts dropping.

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