

Mozambique's beer poisoning toll climbs to 69 (Update)

January 12 2015

A total 69 people have died of poisoning after drinking traditional beer in northwestern Mozambique, public radio reported Monday.

More than 30 others remain hospitalised after funeral-goers apparently ingested the home-brewed beer known locally as "phombe". It is usually made from millet or sorghum.

The woman who brewed the beer and several members of her family are among the dead, making it difficult for investigators to ascertain what could have contaminated the beer.

Carla Mosse, director of health for Tete province, said the cause of the poisoning is still unknown.

Some local media believe the beer was laced with crocodile bile, a powerful toxin, but that claim has not been proved.

Mozambique's government has declared three days of national mourning.

Burials of the victims began on Sunday and are being speeded up as the local morgue cannot cope with the huge number of bodies.

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