

Liberia: Only five people being treated for Ebola in country

January 26 2015, by Jonathan Paye-Layleh



Axel Addy, Minister for Industry and Commerce of Liberia, speaks to the media about the impact of Ebola in his country during a news conference, at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, Monday, Jan. 26, 2015. (AP Photo/Keystone, Salvatore Di Nolfi)

Liberia said Monday that there are currently only five confirmed cases of Ebola in the entire country—a dramatic turnaround in the West African nation where the virus has taken its deadliest toll.

At the height of the outbreak in August and September, Liberia was recording more than 300 new cases of the virus every week—and experts at the time said even that figure was likely an underestimate of the disease's true toll. To date 3,636 Liberians have died of Ebola, according to the World Health Organization.

But the [outbreak](#) has begun to wane, and the WHO said last week that Liberia recorded only eight new cases in the preceding week.

Now there are now just five people in the country being treated for Ebola, Tolbert Nyenswah, who heads the country's Ebola response, said Monday. Three of them are in Monrovia and two are in Grand Cape Mount County, near the Sierra Leonean border. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is expected to address the [deadly outbreak](#) in her state of the nation address later Monday.

Sierra Leone and Guinea—the other two West African countries hammered by the disease—have also seen a dramatic reduction in cases, but they are reporting more new infections than Liberia.

Still, Nyenswah cautioned that it was too early to say when Liberia would be Ebola-free because authorities must still do the difficult work of tracking down every infected person. Just one missed infection could seed a new cluster.

The World Health Organization also noted recently that experts can only trace about half of new cases in Guinea and Liberia to known contacts, meaning they don't know exactly where the virus is spreading.

In all, Ebola has sickened more than 21,000 people, the vast majority in West Africa, killing more than 8,600 of them.

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