

Guinea tries 58 over attack on Ebola outreach mission

February 6 2015

Guinea has put 58 people on trial over an attack on Ebola outreach workers by a mob wielding machetes, a judicial source said on Friday.

The defendants are accused of wounding several government workers and staff from the global medical aid agency Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) with the knives as well as assaulting them with sticks and stones.

"The 58 people were referred to court for assault and battery, destruction of public buildings, public insults and threats, and rebellion," the source said.

The group, who have been on trial since Monday in the western town of Forecariah, were arrested after the attack in early January on the nearby island of Kaback.

A judicial source in Forecariah told AFP they face six months each in jail if convicted, with verdicts expected next week.

Guinea and its neighbours Sierra Leone and Liberia have registered more than 9,000 deaths since the epidemic flared up in December 2013, according to figures released Friday by the World Health Organization.

Mobs have sporadically attacked healthworkers in all three countries after being taken in by a variety of conspiracy theories, often characterising the outbreak as a plot by the West to murder Africans and harvest their organs.

Guinea has seen the worst of the bloodshed and the situation is particularly tense in the west African nation's densely-forested southern region, where the epidemic began.

A police officer and his driver were killed and their bodies burned in the Forecariah region on January 10 by villagers who accused them of spreading the virus.

In September last year, eight members of an outreach team were killed by protesters denying the reality of the virus and denouncing a "white conspiracy" in the southeastern town of Womey.

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