

# UN Ebola head warns against complacency as fight enters last lap

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The head of the UN's Ebola fighting force on Sunday warned against complacency as the battle against the disease entered its final lap while also hailing Guinea for tightening surveillance.

Mauritanian Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed's comments came a day after Guinea announced a [health emergency](#) in five regions in the south-west and west for 45 days.

Guinean President Alpha Conde announced a series of measures on Saturday, including the temporary closure of hospitals and clinics where there have been cases of Ebola.

Since the Ebola outbreak began in Guinea in December 2013, more than 24,000 people in nine countries have been infected with the virus, and over 10,000 of them have died. All but a handful of those deaths have occurred in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

"On behalf of the international community and the United Nations, I hail this brave decision," Ould Cheikh Ahmed said.

"Guinea has made tremendous efforts," he said. "There have been very positive results but we are now at the most critical moment... the last phase in the fight against Ebola."

"Our biggest enemy today is complacency," he said.

The World Health Organization declared in January that the epidemic was finally declining in west Africa after the three countries at the epicentre recorded a steady drop in cases.

But renewed concern has been triggered by fresh setbacks in the worst-hit nations.

In Sierra Leone, which imposed a three-day nationwide lockdown Friday to prevent a resurgence of the deadly virus, the restrictions were eased for seven hours for Christians to attend Palm Sunday services.

Many priests prayed for a speedy end of the epidemic, a recurrent theme across churches in the country.

"By God's grace, the current stay-at-home will signal the last kick of the dying Ebola horse," said Pastor Henry Williams in a church in a western district of the capital Freetown.

Yvonne Aki Sawyerr, the director of planning at Sierra Leone's National Ebola Response Centre said Sunday that regional authorities were cooperating to stamp out the disease.

"It's a race against time as we want to get Ebola out quickly as we are approaching the ...start of the rainy season," she said.

"We are sharing contact information and follow up on case searches in the border communities. We are working as a single team to monitor the situation."

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