

Sierra Leone orders three-day lockdown against Ebola (Update)

March 21 2015

Sierra Leone's President Ernest Koroma ordered the country's entire population Saturday to stay in their homes for three days in a bid to stem the spread of the deadly Ebola epidemic.

"All Sierra Leoneans must stay at home for three days," he announced, expanding a previous order for a lockdown in the capital Freetown and northern areas of the country nationwide.

"I have made my personal commitment to do whatever it takes to get to zero Ebola infections and I call on every Sierra Leonean in every community to pull together," he added.

People will be ordered to stay home from 0600 GMT March 27 to 1800 GMT March 29, with "no trading activities across the country".

Authorities in the Muslim-majority state will lift the lockdown for part of the day to allow church services on Palm Sunday.

Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone—which have been the centres of the outbreak which has killed more than 10,000 people—have set a goal of cutting off the disease's spread by April 16.

Liberia had been on the point of declaring an end to the epidemic in the country when a new case appeared in its capital Monrovia on Friday.

The infected woman is the wife of a man already cured of the disease, an

anonymous source close the case told AFP. "The situation is under control. We are investigating how she contracted the virus," government spokesman Lewis Brown said Saturday.

One of the deadliest viruses known to man, Ebola is spread only through direct contact with the bodily fluids of the recently deceased or an infected person showing symptoms, such as fever or vomiting.

The World Health Organization said Ebola can still be transmitted in sperm 82 days after a patient carrying the virus is cured.

The worst-ever outbreak of the virus has claimed almost 3,700 lives in Sierra Leone, one of three impoverished west African nations that have seen their economies and healthcare systems wrecked by the crisis.

"The economic development of our country and the lives of our people continue to be threatened by the ongoing presence of Ebola in Sierra Leone," President Koroma said. "The future of our country and the aspirations of our children are at stake."

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