

# Cholera outbreak kills at least 18 in South Sudan

June 23 2015

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At least 18 people have died of cholera in war-torn South Sudan, the health ministry said Tuesday, as it declared an outbreak of the highly contagious infection.

Minister of Health Riek Gai Kok told reporters that 171 cholera cases have been confirmed in the [outbreak](#), which began in crowded United Nations bases in the capital Juba and spread elsewhere in the city.

Tens of thousands of people have sought shelter in the UN camps during 18 months of [civil war](#).

At least 167 people died with over 6,400 cases reported in an outbreak last year, which was later contained.

"After subjecting cases to laboratory tests it was confirmed that there is a [cholera outbreak](#)," Kok said, adding that the first case recorded was on June 1.

"The confirmation of the cases automatically triggers the activation of a full-scale response," he added.

Stamping out cholera—transmitted through drinking water or eating food contaminated with faeces or dirty hands—poses an additional major challenge for the government and aid workers.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and aid workers are carrying out

cholera vaccination campaigns targeting over 100,000 people "to prevent a potential large scale outbreak and prevent deaths," the ministry added.

Kok insisted health workers were better placed to tackle the outbreak than last year.

"The government is in a better position to prevent a potential large scale outbreak this year, largely because of pre-emptive measures undertaken with support from WHO and partners," he said.

More than two million people been forced to flee during the war, with over 137,000 civilians sheltering in UN peacekeeping bases, including over 34,000 civilians crammed into camps in the capital alone.

Two-thirds of the country's 12 million people need aid, with 4.5 million people facing severe food insecurity, according to the UN.

Civil war began in December 2013 when President Salva Kiir accused his former deputy Riek Machar of planning a coup, setting off a cycle of retaliatory killings that has split the poverty-stricken, landlocked country along ethnic lines.

The conflict has been characterised by ethnic massacres, rape and the use of child soldiers.

After a short incubation period of two to five days, [cholera](#) disease causes severe diarrhoea, draining the body of its water. The dramatic loss of fluid is often fatal.

"Anyone with severe watery diarrhoea should report to the designated treatment centre or nearest health facility," the ministry said in a warning.

"Wash hands with soap or ash after using toilets and latrines, before preparing food and after eating food, boil or disinfect drinking water with chlorine."

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