

UN promises 'material' aid to cholera victims in Haiti

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The United Nations will give "material" aid to cholera victims in Haiti and their families, the secretary general's spokesman said Friday, citing the international body's "moral responsibility."

UN chief Ban Ki-moon, in a statement by a spokesman, also noted that a decision Thursday by a US federal appeals court "upheld the immunity of the organization from legal proceedings" brought against it over the [cholera](#) crisis.

US courts have consistently found the international body, headquartered in New York, to be immune from lawsuits over the [cholera epidemic](#) that has killed 10,000 people since it broke out in 2010 near a UN peacekeepers' base.

"The Secretary General is actively working to develop a package that would provide material assistance and support to those Haitians most directly affected by cholera," the statement said.

The aid would go to "the victims of the disease and their families."

It marked the first time the UN has pledged direct financial aid to victims of the [epidemic](#). The organization has established anti-cholera and sanitation programs in cooperation with the Haitian government.

The announcement came a day after the UN acknowledged it had played a role in the deadly epidemic in the poorest country in the Americas.

The UN said Friday it also wants to step up its efforts to contain and eradicate the epidemic, improve health care and treatment, and develop water, health and sanitation infrastructure in the Caribbean nation.

Those efforts "have been seriously underfunded," Ban said.

"The United Nations has a moral responsibility to the victims of the cholera epidemic and for supporting Haiti in overcoming the epidemic and building sound water, sanitation and health systems," his spokesman's statement said.

Ban's deputy spokesman Farhan Haq declined to give details about the planned measures, saying they were being decided at the highest level. The results are expected to be unveiled in two months.

Cholera, transmitted through contaminated drinking water and causes acute diarrhea, is a major challenge in a country with poor sanitary conditions.

Some 72 percent of Haitians have no toilets at home and 42 percent still lack access to drinking water, the UN says.

The disease is still spreading.

In a report earlier this month, French epidemiologist Roland Piarroux found more than 21,000 cases and 200 deaths took place from January to June.

"With a rainy season that will last through November or possibly December, we worry that cholera will be especially deadly this year, easily killing 400 or 500 people."

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