

UN, aid group: Cholera in Yemen to worsen in rainy season

July 21 2017

The U.N. health agency and an international aid organization warned on Friday that Yemen's cholera epidemic, the world's worst since Haiti's 2010 outbreak, is likely to worsen in the rainy season.

The World Health Organization stressed that Yemen's cholera outbreak is "far from being under control, with the rainy season having begun, and possibly increasing the pace of transmission," U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said.

The United Kingdom-based OXFAM group said in a statement that cholera in Yemen is now "the largest ever recorded in any country in a single year."

The warnings came a day after the World Health Organization reported nearly 370,000 suspected cases of cholera and over 1,800 deaths since April 27.

"Cholera has spread unchecked in a country already on its knees after two years of war and which is teetering on the brink of famine," said Nigel Timmins, Oxfam's humanitarian director who has just returned from a fact finding mission to Yemen.

WHO reported a decline in suspected cases over the past two weeks in some of the worst hit areas, including the capital Sanaa, but warned it's too early to tell if this is becoming a trend.

OXFAM warned that Yemen's rainy season from July to September will accelerate the outbreak.

The conflict in Yemen worsened in 2015 when a Saudi-led coalition backing the internationally-recognized government waged an extensive air campaign aimed at dislodging Houthis, whom the coalition accuse of acting as an Iranian proxy, from northern Yemen.

The war has left more than 10,000 civilians dead, displaced 3 million people, and pushed the Arab world's poorest nation to the verge of famine.

International aid organizations are struggling to deliver aid amid fighting and the closure of the country's main airports and port.

In Geneva, WHO said that 5,000 Yemenis fall ill with cholera symptoms every day.

While the disease is easily treatable, people's access to health services is limited because half of the country's health facilities are out of service. The U.N. health agency said children under age 15 account for 41 percent of all suspected cases and people over age 60 account for a third of deaths.

Malnutrition is one of the main challenges in containing the disease.

"We need to break the vicious cycle of malnutrition and diarrhea," WHO said. "Seventeen million people in Yemen are currently food insecure. Malnutrition exacerbates diarrhea, and diarrhea leads to malnutrition."

Haq said WHO and its partners are working to reduce the spread of cholera by scaling up access to clean water and sanitation, setting up treatment centers, training health workers and working with

communities on prevention.

They have provided more than 800,000 bags of intravenous fluids as well as other supplies and medicine to treat Yemenis with cholera symptoms, he said.

© 2017 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: UN, aid group: Cholera in Yemen to worsen in rainy season (2017, July 21) retrieved 19 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-07-group-yemen-cholera-epidemic-worsen.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.