

Yemen cholera cases soar past half-million: WHO

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Cholera is believed to have affected more than 500,000 people and killed nearly 2,000 since late April, the World Health Organization said Monday.

A full 503,484 suspected cases and 1,975 deaths are attributable to the outbreak that erupted less than four months ago in the war-ravaged country, a WHO overview showed.

More than a quarter of the deaths and over 41 percent of all suspected cases are children, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

WHO said the speed at which the deadly waterborne disease was spreading had slowed significantly since early July, but warned that it was still affecting an estimated 5,000 people each day.

The collapse of Yemen's infrastructure after more than two years of war between the Saudi-backed government and Shiite rebels who control the capital Sanaa has allowed the country's [cholera epidemic](#) to swell to the largest in the world.

WHO warned that the disease had spread rapidly due to deteriorating hygiene and sanitation conditions, with millions of people cut off from clean water across the country.

"Yemen's health workers are operating in impossible conditions," WHO

chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

"Thousands of people are sick, but there are not enough hospitals, not enough medicines, not enough clean water," he said, also lamenting that many of the doctors and nurses needed to rein in the outbreak had not been paid for nearly a year.

"They must be paid their wages so that they can continue to save lives," he said.

WHO said that it and its partners were "working around the clock" to support the national efforts to halt the outbreak, adding that more than 99 percent of people who contract cholera in Yemen can survive if they can access health services.

More than 15 million people in the country have no access to basic healthcare.

Tedros called on all sides in Yemen's conflict, which has killed more than 8,300 people since March 2015, to urgently seek a political solution.

"The people of Yemen cannot bear it much longer - they need peace to rebuild their lives and their country," he said.

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