

Plague closes 2 Madagascan universities

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Madagascan authorities Thursday ordered two universities to close temporarily as efforts intensify to halt a plague outbreak that has killed 33 people and caused widespread panic.

The Indian Ocean island nation suffers annual plague outbreaks, but this year the disease has affected urban areas, triggering concern from the World Health Organization (WHO).

"In the fight against the spread of plague, the universities of Toamasina and Antananarivo will be closed for sanitation," the Ministry of Higher Education said in a statement.

The capital Antananarivo and the port city of Toamasina have been at the centre of the [plague outbreak](#).

Thirty-three people are now confirmed to have died nationwide since the end of August.

The campus in Antananarivo is expected to reopen next week, though public gatherings in the city will remain banned.

The outbreak includes [bubonic plague](#), which is spread by infected rats via flea bites, and [pneumonic plague](#), which spreads from person to person.

Pneumonic plague can kill quickly, within 18 to 24 hours of infection if left untreated, but it can be cured by early use of antibiotics.

Long queues have formed outside pharmacies as people flock to buy face masks and medicine.

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