

Lebanon announces first cholera case in almost 30 years

October 6 2022, by Kareem Chehayeb

Lebanon's health ministry on Thursday announced the crisis-hit country's first case of cholera in decades.

The announcement comes as neighboring war-torn Syria is struggling to contain a [cholera outbreak](#) that has spread across the country over the past month.

Lebanon began a downward spiral in late 2019 that has plunged three-quarters of its population into poverty. Rampant power cuts, [water shortages](#), and skyrocketing inflation have deteriorated living conditions for millions.

The Health Ministry said the person infected is from Lebanon's impoverished predominantly rural northern province of Akkar, which borders Syria, adding that it was the first case of the waterborne disease since 1993.

Caretaker Health Minister Firas Abiad has met with authorities and [international organizations](#) following the confirmed case to discuss ways to prevent a possible outbreak.

According to the World Health Organization, a cholera infection is caused by consuming food or water infected with the *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria, and while most cases are mild to moderate, not treating the illness could lead to death.

Richard Brennan, Regional Emergency Director of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, told The Associated Press that the organization has been in talks with authorities in Lebanon and other countries bordering Syria to bring in the necessary supplies to respond to possible cases in the country.

"Cross-border spread is a concern, we're taking significant precautions," Brennan said. "Protecting the most vulnerable will be absolutely vital."

Brennan added that vaccines are in short supply relative to global demand.

Impoverished families in Lebanon often ration water, unable to afford private water tanks for drinking and domestic use.

The U.N. and Syria's Health Ministry have said the source of the outbreak is likely linked to people drinking unsafe water from the Euphrates River and using [contaminated water](#) to irrigate crops, resulting in food contamination.

Syria's [health services](#) have suffered heavily from its yearslong war, while much of the country is short on supplies to sanitize water.

Syrian health officials as of Wednesday documented at least 594 cases of cholera and 39 deaths. Meanwhile, in the rebel-held northwest of the country, health authorities documented 605 suspected cases, dozens of confirmed cases, and at least one death.

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