

Haitians protest UN base over cholera claim

15 November 2010, By JONATHAN M. KATZ , Associated Press



A woman suffering cholera symptoms is carried to St. Catherine hospital, run by Doctors Without Borders, in the Cite Soleil slum in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Monday Nov. 15, 2010. Thousands of people have been hospitalized for cholera across Haiti with symptoms including serious diarrhea, vomiting and fever and hundreds have died. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

(AP) -- Protesters who hold Nepalese U.N. peacekeepers responsible for a deadly outbreak of cholera that has killed 1,000 in three weeks threw stones and threatened to set fire to a base in the country's second-largest city Monday, Haitian radio and eyewitnesses reported.

The protesters also blame the unit for the death of a Haitian youth at the base in September.

The demonstrations began in Cap-Haitien about 6 a.m. (6 a.m. EST; 1100 GMT) and have paralyzed much of the northern port city, national television reporter Johnny Joseph told The Associated Press by phone.

Demonstrators are also targeting other U.N. bases and Haitian national police stations in the city, he said. U.N. police spokesman Andre Leclerc said the demonstrators blocked traffic in the area.

Radio Kiskeya and Radio Caraibes reported that U.N. soldiers and Haitian police fired tear gas and projectiles to disperse at least 1,000 protesters at

the Nepalese base. Joseph said at least three people were injured by Haitian [police](#).

A case of cholera had never before been documented in [Haiti](#), and fear and confusion is following its destructive path. President Rene Preval addressed the nation on Sunday to dispel myths and educate people on good [sanitation](#) and [hygiene](#).

[Cholera](#) is transmitted by feces and can easily be prevented if people have access to safe drinking water and can regularly wash their hands.

But those conditions don't exist in much of Haiti, and tens of thousands of people have been sickened as the disease has spread across the countryside and to nearly all the country's major population centers, including the capital, Port-au-Prince. Doctors Without Borders and other medical aid groups have expressed concern that the [outbreak](#) could eventually sicken hundreds of thousands of people.

The suspicions surround a different Nepalese base located on the Artibonite River system where the outbreak started. The soldiers arrived there in October following outbreaks in their home country and about a week before Haiti's epidemic began.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the strain now ravaging the country matched a strain specific to South Asia, but said they had not pinpointed the origin of the outbreak.

Following an Associated Press investigation, the U.N. acknowledged that there were sanitation problems at the base, but says its soldiers were not responsible for the outbreak. No formal or independent investigation has taken place despite calls from Haitian human-rights groups and U.S. health care experts.

Presidential candidates have seized on the suspicions to denounce the 12,000-strong U.N.

peacekeeping force ahead of Nov. 28 elections.

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APA citation: Haitians protest UN base over cholera claim (2010, November 15) retrieved 21 October 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-11-haitians-protest-base-cholera.html>

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