

Sierra Leone raises Ebola death toll, confirms new cases

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Sierra Leone on Friday raised its death toll from Ebola and doubled the number of confirmed cases of the virus amid fears the deadly epidemic gripping West Africa is spreading.

"Four people are dead out of fourteen cases of Ebola" that have been confirmed in the country since Monday, health ministry official Abass Kamara told AFP.

Sierra Leone's government earlier confirmed two deaths and seven cases of the deadly virus, which has killed more than 100 people in West Africa since it erupted in January.

The two new deaths were from a group of patients who were forcefully taken out of hospital by their relatives who said they needed traditional healing, said Kamara.

The World Health Organisation warned on Wednesday of likely further contagion in Sierra Leone after four of the sick patients were taken back to their home village.

They were removed from an isolation facility in the east of the country by family members who were unwilling to see them remain in a hospital far from home, WHO scientist Pierre Fromenty told reporters in Geneva then.

"Of course by doing that, they exposed themselves, they exposed the villages," he said.

Sierra Leone earlier this week confirmed its first deaths from Ebola in the eastern regions of Kailahun and Kenema, near the border with Guinea, the epicentre of the outbreak.

Government spokesman Abdulai Bayratay earlier on Friday told AFP that Sierra Leone authorities had recorded 26 suspected cases, of which 23 were reported in Kailahun.

Another case was in the diamond region of Kono, also in the east, and two in the capital Freetown.

Ebola is one of a handful of similar fevers that cause vomiting, diarrhoea, muscle pain, and in severe cases, organ failure and unstoppable internal bleeding.

It can be transmitted by blood and other bodily fluids, as well as the handling of contaminated corpses or infected animals.

Sierra Leone has restricted travel in some areas, and reaffirmed an earlier ban on trips to funerals in neighbouring Guinea in a bid to stop the spread of the disease.

"I call on the population to avoid human contact in order to minimise the risk of transmission," Health Minister Miatta Kargbo told AFP.

Additional logistical support was being sent to the eastern regions of Kailahun and Kenema to stem the disease's spread, said Bayratay.

Freetown has received aid from the World Health Organization—which has sent 12 workers, \$150,000 and more than 5,000 medical kits to ensure the safety of [health](#) officers—as well as Britain and Ireland.

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