

HEALTH

Guinea Ebola cases climb due to transmissions at funerals

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A member of the French Red Cross disinfects the area around a motionless person suspected of carrying the Ebola virus as a crowd gathers in Forecariah January 30, 2015.

Guinea has seen a spate of new Ebola cases due to transmissions at funerals, a worrying sign for the African nation as it seeks to stamp out a year-long epidemic that has killed over 11,000 people across the region, a health official said on Friday.

According to figures released on Tuesday by the special government department set up to fight the disease, treatment clinics were handling just eight confirmed Ebola cases.

"Today we have 27 sick in our treatment centers, including 18 confirmed cases," the department's spokesman Fode Tass Sylla told Reuters. "Yesterday alone we recorded five sick."

Sylla said all the new patients had contracted the disease at funeral ceremonies.

Ebola is transmitted through contact with the bodily fluids of those infected or the bodies of those who have died of the disease.

Health officials in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone have carried out wide-reaching information campaigns to warn of the risks of improperly burying victims. However, they have often met with resistance from those who believe the restrictions infringe upon traditional practices.

Liberia last week became the first of the three hardest hit countries to be declared free of the disease, having completed a 42-day period without a new case of Ebola.

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