

# WHO: Ebola 'an international emergency'

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## Ebola crisis

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**The World Health Organization (WHO) has said the spread of Ebola in West Africa is an international health emergency.**

WHO officials said a co-ordinated response was essential to stop and reverse the spread of the virus.

In Nigeria, one of the latest countries to be affected, President Goodluck Jonathan has declared a national state of emergency.

More than 960 people have died from Ebola in West Africa this year, two of them in Nigeria, the WHO says.

There were 68 new cases and 29 deaths reported over the course of two days this week, the United Nations health agency revealed on Friday.

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**This is not a mysterious disease. This is an infectious disease that can be contained"**

Keiji FukudaWHO

It brings the total number of cases to 1,779.

There were 26 new cases in Sierra Leone and 38 in Liberia, but no new cases in Guinea, where the outbreak began.

The WHO said the outbreak was an "extraordinary event".

"The possible consequences of further international spread are particularly serious in view of the virulence of the virus," it said after the meeting.

### **Complex outbreak**

WHO director-general Dr Margaret Chan appealed for help for the countries hit by the "most complex outbreak in the four decades of this disease".

WHO's Margaret Chan: "Countries affected do not have the capacity to manage an outbreak on their own"

She said there would be no general ban on international travel or trade.

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### **Guinean Ebola survivor**

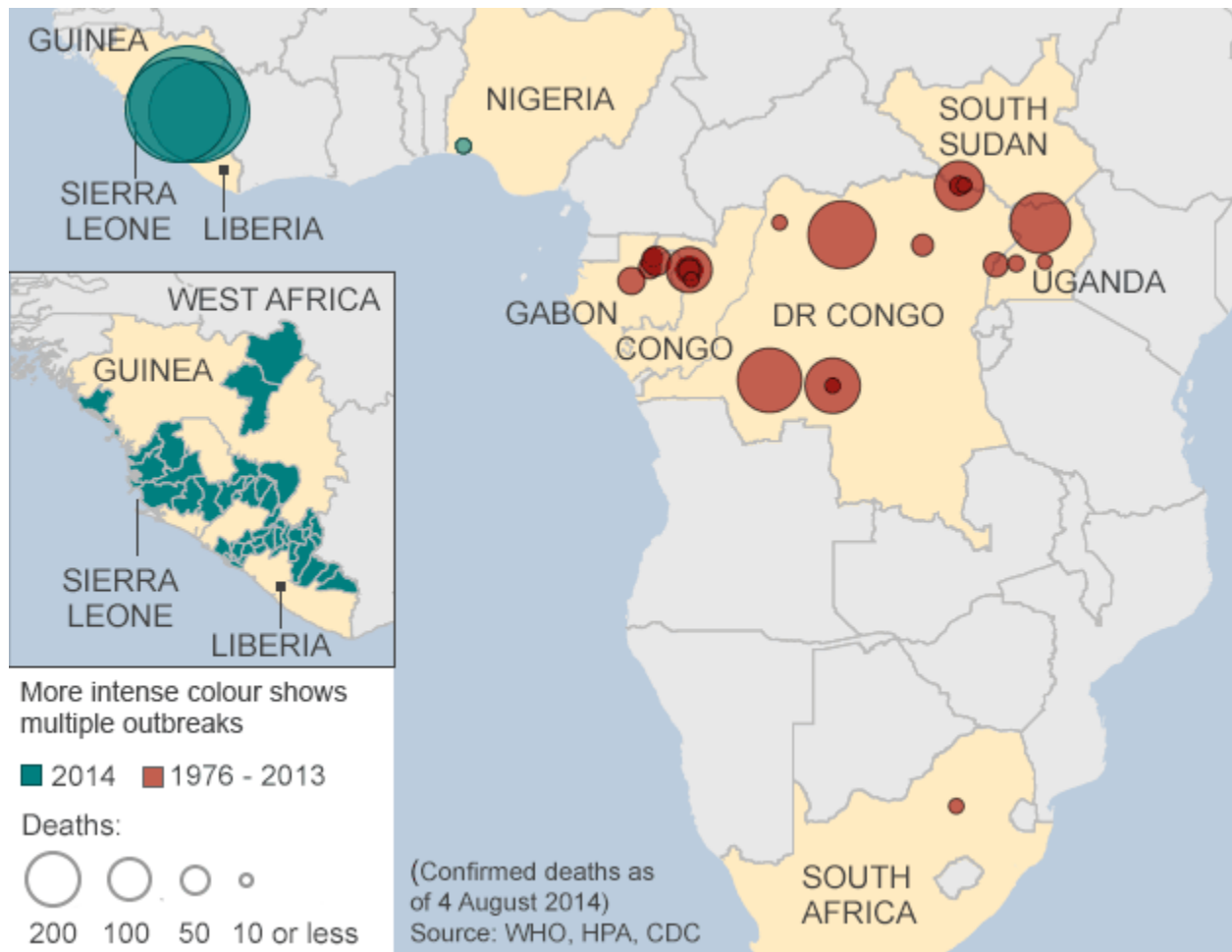
*A fifth year medical student in Guinea tells the BBC French Service about how she is being shunned since recovering from Ebola which she caught whilst working as an intern at a clinic in March:*

We are stigmatised - you know when they look at us like that, even in my own family people are rejecting me. I live with my uncle - my parents are in the village. In the house I eat alone. I feel lonely.

When I felt better, I started going back to medical school. Many distanced themselves from me. Four of us used to sit together, but I ended up sitting by myself.

The treatment centre gave me a certificate showing I had been healed. I showed it to my teachers as I'd missed some assessments while sick. But I haven't done the two exams. The head of department told me to stay at home and get treated. I can't even get an internship.

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However, states should be prepared to detect, investigate and manage Ebola cases, including at airports, she said.

States of emergency are in place in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

Other WHO recommendations include:

- Ebola cases or contacts should not undertake international travel
- Improving the safety and protection that health care workers receive.

### **Analysis: Helen Briggs, Health Editor, BBC News website**

The decision by the WHO to declare Ebola a public health emergency is, by its own definition, an "extraordinary event" which marks "a public health risk to other states through the international spread of disease".

The WHO has declared emergencies only twice in recent years - swine flu in 2009 and polio in May. Although the recommendations stop short of international

flight and trade restrictions, they have symbolic significance. The measures are designed to "galvanise the attention of leaders of countries at a top level," says director-general Dr Margaret Chan.

According to Dr Jeremy Farrar, director of the Wellcome Trust, the recommendations will help provide global leadership. While Ebola continues to pose a very serious health threat for people in West Africa, it remains "very unlikely that the outbreak will turn into a global pandemic", he says.

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Keiji Fukuda, the WHO's head of health security, said that with the right steps and measures to deal with infected people, Ebola's spread could be stopped.

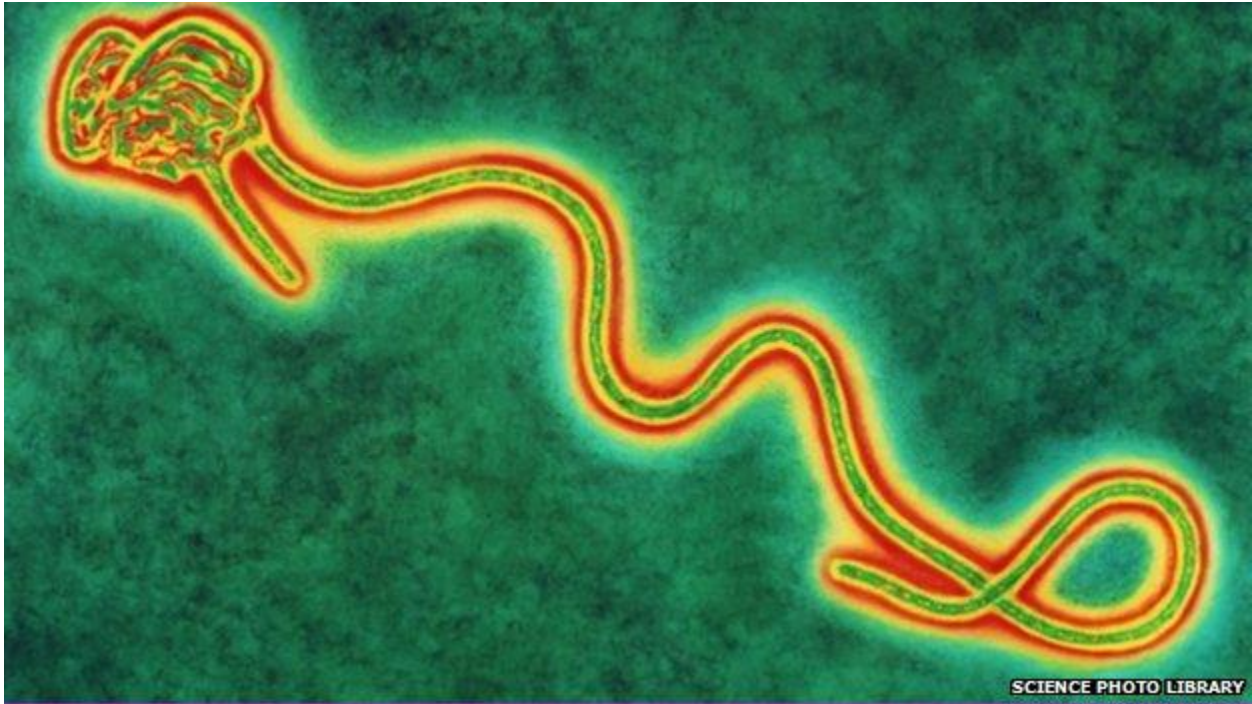
"This is not a mysterious disease. This is an infectious disease that can be contained," he said. "It is not a virus that is spread through the air."

Prof David Heymann of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said the recommendations were "comprehensive and evidence-based".

Prof Tom Solomon, of the UK's NIHR Health Protection Research Unit in Emerging and Zoonotic Infections, welcomed the emphasis on outbreak control in local areas, including the use of full personal protective equipment (gowns, masks, gloves and goggles) with proper training.

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## **Ebola virus disease (EVD)**



- Symptoms include high fever, bleeding and central nervous system damage
- Fatality rate can reach 90% - but the current outbreak is about 55%
- Incubation period is two to 21 days
- There is no vaccine or cure
- Supportive care such as rehydrating patients who have diarrhoea and vomiting can help recovery
- Fruit bats are considered to be virus' natural host

**Are you in West Africa? Have you been affected by the outbreak or the emergency measures? You can email your experiences to [tohaveyoursay@bbc.co.uk](mailto:tohaveyoursay@bbc.co.uk).**

**Or send us your experiences using the form below.**

(Required)Name  (Required)Your E-mail address

(Required)Town & Country  (Required)Your telephone number

(Required)Comments

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