

[Ebola in DR Congo: conflict zones could constitute 'hiding places' for the deadly virus – WHO chief](#)

Following a two-day mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Head of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) on Tuesday repeated his call for warring parties in conflict-riven North Kivu to stop fighting, and allow health teams access to areas affected by the recent Ebola outbreak in the region.

[Speaking at a press briefing in Geneva](#), WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, stated that his visit to Beni and Mangina – epicentre of the outbreak which started about a week ago – left him “more worried” than he had been over containing the outbreak on the western side of the country, which officially ended late last month.

We are asking the international community to help in ensuring access into the inaccessible areas – *Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Chief*

“What makes the outbreak in Eastern DRC or Northern Kivu more dangerous, is that there is a security challenge. There is active conflict in that area,” he stressed, noting that since January, the area had seen more than 120 violent incidents, including killings and kidnappings of civilians.

Referring to the areas where armed groups are operating, he said they could be “hiding places” for the virus. “We have difficulty accessing those areas, and people in those areas will have difficulty moving to places where they can get the support they need,” he explained.

“We are asking the international community to help in ensuring access into the inaccessible areas,” Mr. Tedros pleaded. “We also call on the warring parties for a cessation of hostilities because the virus is dangerous to all, it doesn’t choose between this group or that group,” he stressed.

According to WHO and the Ministry of Health, the number of cases so far stands at 57 confirmed or suspected cases, with 41 deaths, already surpassing the previous Ebola outbreak in the country’s Equateur Province, with 53 cases and 29 deaths. In addition, WHO reports that the number of women infected in Kivu so far is much higher than the number of men infected.



MONUSCO/Alain Coulibaly

In addition to the lack of access, the head of WHO cited several factors that complicate the operational environment for Ebola responders, including the high population density in North Kivu, which was not an issue in Equateur Province; as well as large-scale population movements within the region and across borders with neighbouring countries which continue. Some one million people have been internally-displaced so far by fighting.

Mr. Tedros also reported that seven health workers have been infected to date, explaining that this presents additional challenges for the response.

Mr. Tedros assured that, although all these factors render this outbreak “more difficult to manage,” WHO is continuing to provide support to the Ministry of Health and “doing all we can to be more aggressive than the virus”. Case-finding efforts have led to the identification of over 600 potential virus carriers so far; vaccinations and treatment programmes are underway, and awareness-raising has been stepped up within affected communities, through radio broadcasts and other community-wide communication.

In his statement, Dr. Ghebreyesus commended the partnership and joint efforts by the Government of DRC, WHO, the UN stabilization mission in-country ([MONUSCO](#)), [UN Children’s Fund \(UNICEF\)](#) and various international non-profit organisations in order to defeat the virus.

Thanking donors for their efforts and support in helping defeat the previous outbreak in the Equateur Province, he concluded by calling on the international community to “speed up the financing” to respond to this new crisis.

[Fears for food security and the future of farming families, as Fall Armyworm](#)

[spreads to Asia](#)

An “invasive pest” that devours more than 80 different plant species, including many staple crops, could threaten the food security and livelihoods of millions of small-scale farmers in Asia, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) [warned](#) on Tuesday.

The UN agency is offering its expertise to farmers and Governments in the region to help them manage [Fall Armyworm](#). The insect was recently detected in India, marking the first time it has been found in Asia, and FAO fears it is “highly likely” to spread, with southeast Asia and south China most at risk.

“Fall Armyworm could have a devastating impact on Asia’s maize and rice producers – mostly small-scale farmers who depend on their crops for food and to make a living,” said Kundhavi Kadiresan, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific.

She described the arrival of the pest, which has been moving steadily east across the globe, as “a threat that we cannot ignore.”



FAO/Lesotho/Lechoko Noko

Small-scale farmers cultivate roughly 80 per cent of farmland in Asia, where more than 200 million hectares of maize and rice are cultivated each year, according to FAO. Meanwhile, over 90 per cent of the world’s rice is produced and consumed there.

The fear is that Fall Armyworm, which can fly 100 kilometres at night, could chomp through crops year-round, given the region’s “favourable” climate.

Though native to the Americas, Fall Armyworm has been on the march across Africa over the past two years, affecting millions of hectares of maize and sorghum.

It was first detected in Nigeria in January 2016. Two years later, it had spread to practically all of sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of 10 mostly northern countries and territories.

FAO took immediate steps to tackle Fall Armyworm in Africa and to support countries in mitigating the damage it caused. The agency has supported more than 30 projects on the continent to fight the pest, which can eat dozens of crop species, including maize, rice, vegetables, groundnuts and cotton.

Hans Dreyer, Director of FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division, believes action taken in Africa can also benefit Asia.

"Much of what FAO has already done in sub-Saharan Africa to help farmers and governments better monitor and mitigate Fall Armyworm damage, can also be applied in Asia," he said.

"This includes recommendations on pesticide management, monitoring and early warning, and a practical guide for farmers and government extension workers on how to best manage the pest."

Militias force nearly 2,000 to leave Libyan capital's largest shelter for internally-displaced: UNHCR

In an appeal for the human rights of families originally from the city of Tawergha to be respected, UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler, said that the exodus happened last week, following attacks by unidentified assailants.

"According to residents, a local militia forced the entire population of Triq Al Matar to flee their homes last week, following three nights of indiscriminate raiding and the arbitrary arrest of 94 residents, 12 of whom remain detained by the militia in dismal conditions."

Until the attacks, Triq Al Matar was the largest settlement for internally displaced people in Tripoli and home to around 370 families. They were originally from the northern city of Tawergha, but fled their homes in 2011, after the battle for nearby Misrata ended, seeking refuge in informal settlements around Tripoli or Benghazi.

After their recent targeting in the Libyan capital, victims sought shelter with relatives or in other settlements for displaced people, according to UNHCR.

Families with cars "are now sleeping in them", said Mr. Spindler, noting that the 40,000-strong displaced minority from Tawergha are waiting to return home "following an agreement by the parties involved" in the crisis-wracked country.



UNHCR/Tarik Argaz

A house in Triq al Matar settlement in Libya demolished by a local militia to force Tawergha community to leave the area. 10 August 2018.

“All I can say is that they have been subject to prosecution and discrimination, and they have been prevented so far” from returning to their city of origin, Spindler added. “Although now, there are moves that seem to be opening a way for them to return, and we hope that this will be the case soon.”

The development comes amid ongoing factional conflict in oil-rich Libya, widespread instability and a humanitarian and economic crisis, despite the international community’s efforts to provide a platform for reconciliation agreements between warring parties.

“The problem as you know in Libya is that there are numbers of competing authorities as well as militias with different allegiances,” Spindler said. “So this complicates the issue and makes the protection of IDPs and others very difficult...this is a part of the reality on the ground.”

In Libya, some 192,000 displaced people have been living in dire conditions for years, according to UNHCR. The agency is calling for urgent solutions to end their suffering and allow them to return home in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner.

[UN chief appeals for calm as Mali](#)

presidential election draws to a close

Following the conclusion of the second round of presidential elections in Mali, political leaders in the West African country are being encouraged by the UN Secretary-General to promote a peaceful atmosphere and avoid incendiary rhetoric.

António Guterres's request came in a [statement](#) congratulating the people and Government for the vote, which was held on Sunday. Malians initially went to the polls in late July to choose a new leader.

Incumbent Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who is seeking a second term, faced more than 20 opponents, including main opposition leader, Soumaila Cisse.

The run-off election was called as none of the candidates secured the required 50 per cent of votes. The final results are not expected for a few days.

The UN chief welcomed measures that allowed voting to occur safely in most of the vast country, amid difficult weather and security challenges in some areas.

"The Secretary-General appeals to all parties to remain calm through the conclusion of the electoral process, and to continue to address any grievances in accordance with the laws and constitution of Mali," according to the statement, which was issued on Monday evening by his Spokesman.

"He calls on all political leaders to continue to promote a peaceful atmosphere and avoid incendiary rhetoric."

UNICEF appeals for end to 'war on children' in Syria and Yemen

Attacks against children caught in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen must stop, the UN children's agency, [UNICEF](#), appealed on Monday.

In a tightly worded [statement](#), UNICEF pointed out that since Sunday, 28 children were reported killed in Idlib and western Aleppo, located in northern Syria.

The death toll included an entire family of seven.

Furthermore, three UNICEF-supported health facilities were also attacked, two

of which are now out of service.

“The war on children in Syria is putting at least one million children at risk in Idlib alone,” said the statement, attributable to Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

These latest incidents follow the deaths of 21 children in Yemen last week, killed when their school bus was hit during an airstrike.

For Juliet Touma, UNICEF Chief of Communications in the region, they represent an escalation in attacks on children.

“There’s obviously a war on children,” she told *UN News*, explaining that ongoing fighting means children in the two countries are being deprived of basic rights such as access to healthcare and education.

The Syrian crisis began nearly eight years ago with civilians continuing “to bear the brunt of a conflict marked by unparalleled suffering, destruction and disregard for human life,” according to the UN humanitarian affairs office, [OCHA](#).

UNICEF reported that more than five million children there require humanitarian assistance, with nearly half forced to flee their homes.

Meanwhile, the UN humanitarian affairs office, OCHA, said three years of fighting in Yemen means nearly two-thirds of the population requires some form of aid relief or protection support to survive.

“Across the region there are about 30 million children who need humanitarian assistance,” Ms. Touma said, also referring to the situation in places such as Libya, Sudan and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

“So, children under attack...and that needs to come to an end.”