

[China's Yunnan reports another H7N9 fatality](#)

Southwest China's Yunnan Province has reported another death from the H7N9 strain of bird flu.

The female patient, 23, was mother of the three-year old infant girl who died of H7N9 earlier this month, according to the Health and Family Planning Commission of Yunnan Province Wednesday.

The family of three went to east China's Jiangxi Province for the Spring Festival holiday on Jan. 21, and had contact with live poultry there.

The patient, who has only been identified by her surname Yang, developed symptoms on Feb. 4. She was hospitalized four days later as she had close contact with her daughter, who tested positive for H7N9 virus and died on Feb. 7.

Her condition deteriorated rapidly and she died in hospital Tuesday night.

Other people who had been in close contact have all tested negative for the virus so far.

H7N9 bird flu has been reported in several provinces in China so far this year, with 79 people died in January from the virus nationwide, according to the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

The live poultry trade has been suspended in cities across the provinces of Sichuan, Hunan and Zhejiang.

H7N9 is a bird flu strain first reported to have infected humans in China in March 2013. Infections usually occur in winter and spring.

[China reports 79 deaths from H7N9 bird flu in January](#)

China reported 79 fatalities from H7N9 avian flu in January, health authorities said Wednesday.

Since the beginning of the year, 16 provincial regions have reported human H7N9 avian flu cases, with 192 cases in January, according to the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

From Feb. 6 to 12, 69 such cases were reported across the country, including

eight fatalities.

In China, most cases were around the Yangtze River Delta and Pearl River Delta areas, said Shu Yuelong, director of the Chinese National Influenza Center.

Contact with infected poultry and exposure to live poultry markets pose risks of infection, Shu said, adding that evidence rules out sustained human-to-human transmission of avian flu.

Health authorities are implementing a raft of measures to address the situation, including improving surveillance and risk assessment, more training for medical staff, and allocating medical resources more effectively.

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15 Feb 2017



Half of Scotland's sheriff courts are taking longer to process cases than they were a year ago, new figures have revealed.

In total, more than 30 per cent are now failing to hit the 26-week target from issuing a caution or charge to reaching a verdict.

That compares to 73 per cent for the same period the previous year, with eight courts failing to even get 60 per cent of cases concluded on time.

Only two facilities – in Portree and Stornoway – managed to get all cases wrapped up within the six-month timeframe.

And of Scotland's 40 sheriff courts, 19 are performing more poorly than a year ago.

It suggests courts across the country are struggling to cope with a series of closures embarked upon by the SNP in recent years.

One in five sheriff and justice of the peace courts closed, despite warnings of an increased workload for those remaining and inconvenience for victims and witnesses.

The statistics were revealed following a parliamentary question by Scottish Conservative chief whip John Lamont.

They show, in November 2016, 69.8 per cent of cases were dealt with in time, compared to 73.24 per cent for November 2015.

The Scottish Conservatives warned against court closures, arguing delays like this would occur, while lawyers have also been critical of the decision.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

“This is another example of the SNP being warned against making a decision for a number of reasons, but blundering on anyway.

“Now it’s taking longer to get cases through court, and many will feel that’s a direct result of the SNP’s closure programme.

“This doesn’t just have an adverse impact on the staff left to sort this out, but it also creates inconvenience for witnesses and victims of crime.

“Now that the SNP has shut these courts right across the country, the least it could do is ensure those remaining have sufficient resources to see cases through to their conclusion in the target timeframe.”

Notes to editors:

To see a copy of the data obtained by the Scottish Conservatives, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Copy-of-Court-cases-PQ.xlsx>

The Scottish Conservatives have consistently criticised the SNP for the programme of court closures:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2015/09/sheriff-courts-less-efficient-in-wake-of-snp-closure-programme/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2013/03/snp-hasnt-thought-through-court-closures/>

Shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross quizzed Michael Matheson on the issue at a recent Holyrood justice committee:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10723>

[PODCAST: The power of bearing witness](#)

– how rape became an ‘act of genocide’

15 February 2017 – Shame and stigma prevent many rape survivors in conflict zones from reporting the horrific abuses they endure at the hands of war but the criminals whose sole aim in carrying out these horrific deeds is to torture and humiliate their enemy.

Yet the courageous testimonies of women who survived rape during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda provided the evidence required for a United Nations war crimes tribunal to find Jean-Paul Akayesu guilty, four years after the shocking conflagration, marking the first judgment for the crime of genocide under international law.

Rape was made a part of Akayesu’s genocide conviction.

In the latest episode of the *UN Radio* podcast series *The Lid is On*, Michele Mitchell, a co-director of the documentary film, *The Uncondemned*, was researching how and when rape was first prosecuted as a crime of war for her next project when she first heard about the so called ‘Akayesu’ case.

She began by studying the wrong case. Most of the documentation she found had to do with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

It was not until Ms. Mitchell spoke to a human rights lawyer Sara Darehshori, a senior counsel for the Human Rights Watch United States’ programme, that she found out about a historic trial that went before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

We promise to speak only the truth, to say what we saw and not what we heard; for justice not revenge

At the time, almost 20 years ago, Sara was a co-counsel for the prosecution. She is the one who found the ‘smoking gun’ that allowed the UN tribunal to amend its indictment against the former Mayor of Taba town in Rwanda, Jean-Paul Akayesu, and try him for rape as an act of genocide.

During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, in a span of one hundred days, between eight-hundred thousand and one million men, women and children were massacred by Hutu militia – a rate of killing four times greater than at the height of the Nazi Holocaust.

Michele said she did not want to do “just another prosecutor’s story.” She wanted to include the women who had testified during this historic trial. She said that she wanted to understand what motivated these women who had suffered so much to say “enough” and to take action.

“They were killed simply because of who they are; because they are Tutsis. Hutus protecting Tutsis or those married to Tutsis were also killed,” said

Adama Dieng, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide said during a screening of the film on the ground-breaking trial, organized by the Outreach Programme on the Rwandan Genocide and the United Nations.

As the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) came to a close, the world body's Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide and former ICTR Registrar Amada Dieng shares his experience in bringing innovation to the Tribunal.

In Taba alone, close to 2,000 Tutsis were murdered.

Many of the women were raped by the armed local militia, or *Interahamwe*, and communal police, investigations by the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, or ICTR, uncovered.

These acts of sexual violence were often accompanied by death threats. The women were also forced to endure multiple acts of sexual violence that were at times committed by one or more assailants.

The courageous testimonies of the rape survivors provided the evidence required for the ICTR's Trial Chamber to find Akayesu guilty of rape.

One witness, known as 'JJ,' and other rape survivors placed him at the scene of the crime, and confirmed that he used his authority to incite and encourage the militia and police to carry out these acts, although he was not accused of rape by any of the women.

On 2 September 1998, Jean Paul was found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity. With this case, the ICTR became the first international tribunal to enter a judgement for genocide and the first to interpret the definition of genocide set forth in the Geneva Conventions, according to the UN Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals.

AUDIO: "The Lid is On" – UN Radio Podcast: "How rape became an act of genocide"

In the same judgement, the ICTR also defined the crime of rape in international criminal law and recognized rape as a means of perpetrating genocide.

Akayesu was sentenced to life for "criminally responsible for aiding and abetting" for rape as a crime against humanity.

Delivering a statement following the ruling, Judge Navanethem "Navi" Pillay, who went on to become the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the UN tribunal wanted to "send out a strong message that rape is no longer a trophy of war."

As the Rwandan women sat behind a curtain in a tiny court in Arusha, Tanzania and recounted in painful detail the brutal and violent sexual assaults they endured during the genocide, they had no idea they would make history. And

that by doing so, they would give hope to survivors like them.

[UN kicks off preparations for upcoming summit on oceans, launches voluntary commitment website](#)

15 February 2017 – The world dumps the equivalent of one garbage truck of plastic into the ocean every minute, the United Nations heard today at the start of a two-day meeting to prepare for this June's Ocean Conference that will aim to help safeguard the planet's oceans and help them recover from human-induced problems.

“When leaders from across Governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, and the scientific and academic communities, gather together in New York, from 5-9 June for The Ocean Conference, we will be witness to a turning point,” the President of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson, told the participants, who also included the Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden and the Minister for Fisheries of Fiji, the countries co-hosting the conference.

“We will witness the point in history when humanity truly began the process of reversing the cycle of decline that accumulated human activity has brought upon the Ocean,” Mr. Thomson added.

The high-level Oceans Conference aims to get everyone involved in conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 14.

The UN has called for voluntary commitments to implement Goal 14 and today launched an online commitment registry which has its first three commitments – the Swedish Government, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and Peaceboat, a non-governmental organization. The site will be up through the end of the Conference, which starts on World Environment Day, marked annually on 5 June, and includes 8 June, celebrated as World Oceans Day.

The voluntary commitments “underscore the urgency for action and for solutions,” said Under-Secretary-General Wu Hongbo, who heads the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs and serves as the Secretary-General of the Conference.

Addressing participants today, Mr. Wu said preparations for the Conference are “on track.”

“The health of our oceans and seas, and the future wellbeing of our planet and our society, demand no less,” he said.

In addition to pollution, The Oceans Conference and SDG 14 address overfishing, as well as acidification and increasing global water temperatures linked to climate change.

Discussing the problems ahead of today's preparatory meeting, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, Isabella Lovin said in a video log on Twitter that the Conference could be a 'chance of a lifetime' to save the oceans under enormous stress.

'We don't need to invent or negotiate something new, we just need to have action to implement what we already agreed upon,' she said in reference to the expected 'Call to Action' that will result from the Conference in connection with stopping illegal fishing, stopping marine pollution and addressing the special circumstances of small island developing States.

Representing one of the many small island nations struggling with these issues, the Minister for Fisheries of Fiji, Semi Koroilavesau, urged Conference participants to make voluntary contributions, saying the oceans are of 'outmost importance' to his country.