Beat: Miscellaneous

Yellow fever outbreak in Sudan's Darfur kills at least 164

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USPA News - At least 164 people in Sudan`s troubled Darfur region have died over the last three months as a result of yellow fever, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the country`s health ministry said on Monday. More than 500 others have fallen ill.

The outbreak began in the central and southern regions of Darfur in early September but residents have accused local authorities of taking little to no action until mid-October, when dozens of people had already died. The victims suffered from a number of symptoms, including diarrhea, vomiting, and bleeding from both the mouth and nose. On October 30, World Health Organization spokesman Tarik Jasarevic said preparations were underway for a mass vaccination campaign to vaccinate the at-risk population in Darfur. As of November 30, the vaccination campaigns in the region had reached more than half of the targeted population. But despite the vaccination campaign, a joint statement released Monday by the World Health Organization and Sudan`s Federal Ministry of Health informed the number of suspected cases has reached at least 677, including 164 deaths. This puts the case fatality rate at approximately 24 percent. About 58 percent of the reported cases are from Central Darfur, 9.3 percent are from South Darfur, 17.2 percent are from West Darfur, and 14.6 percent are from North Darfur. At least 32 out of 64 localities in Darfur are believed to have been affected by the yellow fever outbreak. Health authorities are now preparing for a second phase of the vaccination campaign after the International Coordination Group (ICG) on Vaccines approved a request for the release of 1.3 million doses of yellow fever vaccine and injection materials. This is expected to cover approximately 1.21 million people in the region. There is no cure for yellow fever, which is an acute viral haemorrhagic disease transmitted by infected mosquitoes. Treatment is aimed at reducing the symptoms for the comfort of patients, and measures often taken include supportive care to treat dehydration and fever and blood transfusion if needed. "It is a preventable disease with symptoms and severity varying from case to case," Jasarevic explained in October. "Protective measures like the use of bed nets, insect repellent and long clothing are considered the best methods to contain an outbreak. Vaccination is the single most important measure for preventing yellow fever." It is estimated some 200,000 people are infected by yellow fever each year, killing approximately 30,000 of them. The virus is endemic in tropical areas of Africa and Latin America, which have a combined population of over 900 million people. Up to half of severely affected persons will die from the disease without treatment.

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