

Air France suspends Sierra Leone flights over Ebola

27 August 2014

Air France said it was suspending its flights to Sierra Leone from Thursday because of an Ebola outbreak that has killed at least 1,400 people in West Africa.

"Pilots and others, as well as passengers, generally have very low risk of Ebola infection," Keiji Fukuda, WHO's Assistant Director-General on Health Security, told the same news conference.

The French flag carrier announced the "temporary suspension" of its flight to Freetown that it runs three times a week but insisted it would continue to serve Guinea and Nigeria, other Ebola-hit countries.

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Wednesday's announcement followed advice from the French government to stop flights to Sierra Leone's capital Freetown given "the way the epidemic has evolved and the condition of the health systems".

The lethal tropical virus which re-emerged in west Africa early this year has since infected more than 2,600 people.

Liberia has been worst hit with 624 registered deaths. Guinea, where the current outbreak was first detected, has reported 406 deaths, Sierra Leone 392 and Nigeria five, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday.

In Sierra Leone, it is the east of the country that is especially hard-hit but a death in Freetown has spread fear that the capital could be in line for a wave of cases.

Air France's decision came a day after British Airways said it was suspending flights to Liberia and Sierra Leone until next year due to Ebola concerns.

The United Nations Ebola envoy David Nabarro on Monday took a swipe at airlines who had "isolated" Ebola-hit countries by scrapping flights.

"By isolating the country, it makes it difficult for the UN to do its work," Nabarro told reporters in Freetown on the fifth day of a tour of the region.

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