

Mali government, UN declare country Ebola-free (Update)

January 18 2015

The Malian government and the United Nations on Sunday declared the country free of Ebola after 42 days without any new cases of the deadly virus.

Health Minister Ousmane Kone said no confirmed cases had been registered since December 6 when the last Ebola patient had tested negative.

"I declare this day... the end of the epidemic of the Ebola virus in Mali," he said in a statement broadcast on state television ORTM.

The west African country "had come out" of the epidemic, Ibrahima Soce Fall, the head of the Malian office of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), confirmed.

In accordance with World Health Organization recommendations, the spread of the Ebola virus could be declared over after 42 days without any new cases being recorded, he said in a separate statement.

Kone saluted the Malian authorities and the different players in the anti-Ebola fight for "weeks of intense work" that led to the result.

He also praised Mali's health workers and the country's partners for their efforts while urging that basic hygiene and protective behaviour measures be kept up.

Seven people died of Ebola in Mali. The first fatality in October was a two-year-old girl brought from neighbouring Guinea to stay with relatives.

Shortly afterwards, a Muslim cleric, also from Guinea, died in the capital Bamako. He transmitted the virus, directly or indirectly, to seven other people, five of whom died.

The last patient to be treated for Ebola in Mali made a full recovery and was discharged from hospital in early December.

Countries must report no new cases for 42 days—or two incubation periods of 21 days—to be declared Ebola-free.

A total 21,296 people have so far been infected with Ebola since the world's worst-ever outbreak began just over a year ago, and 8,429 of them have died, according to the latest figures from the World Health Organization.

The vast majority of the deaths occurred in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

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