

All Liberia Schools Ordered Closed to Contain Ebola



Freetown, July 31 (RHC)-- Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf says the country will close all schools in a bid to contain Ebola. "All schools are ordered closed following further directives from the Ministry of Education," Sirleaf said in a televised interview on Wednesday.

"All non-essential staff -- to be determined by the heads of ministries and agencies -- are to be placed on 30 days' compulsory leave." Sirleaf also stated that Liberia would allocate \$5 million as an "initial contribution" to the regional fight against Ebola.

The president's announcement follows her order on Monday to close most of the country's land borders. Liberia, together with neighboring Guinea and Sierra Leone, is fighting a hard battle to prevent the spread of the deadly disease.

According to the World Health Organization, at least 1,201 people have been infected in these three countries since the start of the year. Guinea is the worst-hit country with 319 deaths as of July 23rd. Liberia has reported 129 deaths, while 224 have lost their lives in Sierra Leone.

There is currently no known cure for Ebola, a form of hemorrhagic fever whose symptoms are diarrhea, vomiting and bleeding. The virus spreads through direct contact with infected blood, feces or sweat. It can also be spread through sexual contact or the unprotected handling of contaminated corpses.

Ebola was first discovered in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1976 in an outbreak that killed 280 people. It remains one of the world's most virulent diseases, which kills up to 90 percent of those who fall sick.

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