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Call

Ebola Epidemic: Call to Solidarity with the people of West Africa

The Ebola epidemic in West Africa is spreading. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), over 2,900 people have already died of the virus in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, whilst a further 6,200 have been infected. The United Nations (UN) has expressly warned that the spread of the illness is already exponential. Time is running out.

The situation in West Africa is worsening dramatically. Both Liberia and Sierra Leone are in a state of emergency. The affected areas are subject to quarantine rules and curfews, which are being controlled by security forces. Due to the state of emergency it is no longer possible to even guarantee the provision of basic health services in these countries, both of which have already been weakened by civil war. Moreover the acute shortage of food at many of the treatment facilities has already resulted in several riots as well as inciting infected patients to escape from hospitals. By August this year the price of food had already risen by 150 per cent throughout the region. The UN's World Food Programme (WFP) is warning of a food crisis that will affect some 1.3 million people.

The Ebola epidemic is affecting national economies as well as public order. Again and again quarantine measures, travel and transportation restrictions, increasing prices and food scarcity are resulting in civil unrest, and are threatening to destroy hard-won developmental progress. The UN Security Council has classified the epidemic as a "threat to world peace and international security."

People living in the affected areas need our solidarity. Increased aid is an urgent necessity. More medical aid needs to be sent to the region and faster in order to contain the epidemic. The same applies to the necessary food aid. The international community must also provide urgently needed medical aid personnel. We would like to express our gratitude and respect for those experienced aid workers already providing the necessary support on site under the auspices of the WHO and

Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders). Increasing numbers of volunteers are also stepping forward. We welcome these powerful indications of commitment and solidarity.

But what the dramatic situation in West Africa also shows is that robust health systems and state structures are prerequisites for managing sudden outbreaks of infection. The international community needs to invest more in both.

We urge all governments, international organisations, aid organisations, NGOs and the many private initiatives to increase their effective contributions towards the fight against the horrific Ebola epidemic in West Africa as well as the food scarcity. This is of central importance to us.