Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus  
Director-General  
World Health Organization  
20 avenue Appia,  
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Geneva, 27.09.2017

Subject: Cholera Epidemic in Sudan

Dear Dr. Ghebreyesus,

We wish to kindly draw your attention to the cholera epidemic currently ravaging many parts of the Republic of Sudan and causing the death of thousands of victims, especially in Sudan’s peripheral areas. Since the outbreak of the disease in August 2016, all of Sudan’s 18 states, including the national capital Khartoum and its twin cities Omdurman and Khartoum North (Bahri) are severely affected. The epicentre of the cholera pandemic is now reported in the war-ravaged Darfur region.

All indicators suggest the widespread nature of the disease and the need for urgent intervention by the World Health Organization. Evidence of the existence of this deadly disease in Sudan is that on 1st June 2017, Sudan’s Federal Minister of Health informed the National Assembly “Parliament” about the spread of the disease in many parts of the country and he provided precise figures of the number of confirmed cholera cases registered and the mortalities reported during the period of August 2016 – June 2017. Other independent sources, including the US Embassy in Khartoum and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) confirmed, in two separate occasions, the spread of cholera in Sudan.

Although we believe that the figures indicated by the Government of Sudan (GoS) are conservative and do not reflect the reality on the ground, however, the case fatality rate deduced in June 2017 is over 1.8% of confirmed cholera cases, which is a mortality rate above the threshold to declare cholera epidemic in a country. According to independent medical practitioners in Khartoum and elsewhere in Sudan, the numbers of confirmed cases of cholera are much higher and the mortality rate in some affected areas has reached over 10% of the declared cholera cases.

We are very concerned that the GoS refused to declare the existence of cholera in the country for several months and instead it refers to the epidemic as “acute watery diarrhoea” in the words of Sudan’s Minister of Health when he informed journalists in Khartoum about the existence of the disease on 4 June 2017. The apparent unwillingness of the GoS to declare the cholera epidemic in the country severely affected national and international mobilization efforts to rescue the victims and to provide them with the necessary protection. In addition, there were reports that GoS – at Federal and State levels – obstructed the work of local volunteers. Dr. Hussein Gasim Abu-Aker, head of medical emergency service at Omdurman Hospital had been dismissed from his post because he refused to conceal the existence of the cholera epidemic. On 7 June 2017, the security forces arrested and detained three activists (Mr. Ahmed Abu Zaid, Adil Hadatha and Eyman Ali Ismail) while they were taking part in an awareness raising campaign against cholera in Haj Yusuf residential area in Khartoum Bahri.
Dear Dr. Ghebreyesus,

We call on you to take leadership in addressing the cholera crisis in Sudan, especially in the Darfur region and save the lives of thousands of likely victims that are languishing in miserably camps for internally displaced persons. We particularly appeal to you to call upon the GoS to declare, in no ambiguous terms, the existence of a cholera pandemic in the country. We further call on the WHO to develop emergency plans for intervention to curb the ongoing cholera epidemic in Sudan, taking into consideration the special needs of regions of the country that witness concentration of vulnerable groups in densely populated makeshift settlements with extremely poor health service and sanitation such as Darfur, where environmental and health infrastructures are extremely poor.

Signed:

1. Abdelbagi Jibril, Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre
2. Abdelmonim Al-Jak, Sudan Democracy First Group
3. Adeeb Yousif, World Peace & Reconciliation
4. Adil Abdel Aati, Harambi Foundation
5. Afaf Hamed, Women Voice for Peace in Sudan
6. Ahmed H Adam, Independent Scholar, School of Law, SOAS University of London
7. The Baroness Caroline Cox, Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust
8. Ben Bradburn, Darfur Interfaith Network, Washington, DC
9. Biro Diawara, Centre du Commerce International Pour le Développement
10. Diane Koosed, Never Again Coalition
11. Eileen Weiss, Co-Founder, NY Coalition for Sudan
12. Elnour Hamad, Independent Scholar
13. Eric Cohen, Co-founder, Act for Sudan, Boston, MA, USA
14. Esther Sprague, Sudan Unlimited
15. Gene Binde, Concerned Citizens For Change
16. Hannah Forster, African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
17. Rev. Heidi McGinness, Director of Outreach, Christian Solidarity International-USA
18. Katie-Jay Scott, Stop Genocide Now
19. Laura Limuli, Coordinator, Brooklyn Coalition for Darfur & Marginalized Sudan
20. Lauren Fortgang, Never Again Coalition
21. Lazim Suleiman Elbasha, Skills for Nuba Mountains
22. Mark C Hacket, Operation Broken Silence,
23. Marty Fromer, Never Again Coalition in Portland, OR
24. Nell Okie, Elsa-Gopa Trust
25. Niemat Ahmadi, Darfur Women Action Group
26. Paul Slovic, Genocide Scholar and Risk Analyst, University of Oregon
27. Sadig Ali Hassan, Darfur Bar Association
28. Dr. Samuel Totten, Professor Emeritus, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville,
29. Sharon Silber, Jews Against Genocide
30. Susan Morgan, Investors Against Genocide, San Francisco
31. William Rosenfeld, Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur, Boston