

EBOLA: UN URGES AFFECTED COUNTRIES TO SCREEN TRAVELERS



Countries affected by the Ebola virus must start exit screening immediately of all the passengers who are leaving the international airports, major ground crossings and sea ports - stated the recent report from the United Nations health agency.

The high risk of **Ebola virus that is being transmitted especially during air travel is actually low unlike the other common infections like tuberculosis or influenza.** The reason behind this is that it does not spread by breathing the air and also airborne particles from the infected person.

Nonetheless WHO (World Health Organization) said that, anyone having an illness which is consistent mostly with the virus must not be allowed to travel and all the passengers should ensure that they wash their hands routinely and try as much as possible to avoid any direct contact with the body fluids of an infected person.

'Transmission normally requires a direct contact with secretions, blood, organs or any other body fluids of the infected living or dead persons or even animals, all are considered to be unlikely exposures especially for an average traveler,' reported the agency. 'There must be no international travel of Ebola virus cases or contacts, unless it is ensured to be part of appropriate medical evacuation.'

The best and only way to deal with the disease, of which there is no licensed treatment, is by just isolating the affected people and also watching closely for the signs of infection especially in those who may have come in contact with the patient. To add to that also, a person normally has no identifiable symptoms for 2 to 21 days. After the incubation period, the symptoms usually include weakness, fever, muscle pain, sore throat and headache, stated WHO. Later, it will be accompanied by symptoms like diarrhea, vomiting, rash and in some cases bleeding.

All the countries including those which are not affected by Ebola virus in West Africa have to strengthen their own ability to detect and immediately contain the new cases without even doing anything that will interfere with the international travel or in other case trade unnecessarily, the agency also said. **There is no need to impose any travel restrictions and also the active screening of passengers if they are not neighbors with countries affected by Ebola virus,** it said.

The agency which is based in Geneva has been criticized most by the non-UN organizations. They claim that the agency is slow when it comes to emergency response to Ebola crisis. In fact some countries have already banned direct flights to Ebola-affected countries. Most of the airlines which normally fly in and out of Liberian capital have decided to suspend their usual flights. Ivory Coast, which is a neighboring country to Guinea and Liberia, has banned any direct flight from those particular countries.

A task force that monitors the impact of Ebola virus mainly on travel and transport was launched by the UN health agency with WTO (World Tourism Organization), ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization), ACI (Airports Council International), IATA (International Air Transport Association)

and WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council).

Most of the identified infections in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia have occurred when the family members or friends acted as the caregivers to those who are sick or during the burials that don't follow the infection prevention and also necessary control measures, according to World Health Organization officials.

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