



For immediate release – 8 July 2014

Healthcare workers killed by Ebola's worst outbreak ever

The global trade union federation Public Services International condemns the preventable deaths of dozens of healthcare workers, killed on the job by Ebola because they did not have the necessary tools and equipment.

The current Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone is the worst ever and the first to spill widely across several countries. Ebola has no cure, but can be diagnosed and treated. Treatment requires intensive care and close contact between the patient and the healthcare worker.

Treatment can save lives, but should not kill healthcare workers!

It is a tragic reminder to national and international authorities that basic public health requires adequate investment both in healthcare workers and in health infrastructure to fight disease outbreaks of this kind.

Rosa Pavanelli, PSI General Secretary, warned: “We cannot accept pitiful excuses, whether from health ministers or donor agencies. Health workers must have the tools to do their jobs. All whose work brings them in contact with Ebola victims must have the protective gear. Our members are dying because of unsafe working conditions, this is criminal neglect.”

The chair of PSI's West African Health Sector Unions' Network (WAHSUN), **Dr Ayuba Wabba said:** “We demand that Ministries of Health, the World Health Organization and the West African Health Organization:

- Implement best practice guidelines for Ebola for all health facilities, including full and continuous supply of the needed equipment
- Establish policies and legislation to protect healthcare workers
- Set up Ebola-specific information and communication centres in all national capitals, regions, districts and provinces to provide timely and accurate information to the public
- Intensify healthcare worker education on universal precautions and best practices for Ebola and other communicable diseases at all health facilities

Our unions will keep up the pressure, every day, until our members no longer have to lay down their lives without cause, and until we are able to provide the quality care that is so urgently needed.”

PSI supports WAHSUN's continuing leadership on behalf of the unions of health and social services workers of the region, and their response to Ebola.

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