

Iraq confirms 13 cholera cases, scores suspected

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Scanning electron microscope image of *Vibrio cholerae*. Credit: Wikipedia

A cholera outbreak in Iraq has infected at least 13 people and scores more suspected cases have been sent for analysis, most from the northern Kurdistan region, health officials said Sunday.

"Ten cases of cholera have been recorded in the province" of Sulaimaniyah, said Sabah Hawrami, district health chief in the autonomous Kurdistan region.

Another 56 [suspected cases](#) from the same province are being analysed by a central laboratory in the capital Baghdad—the only one able to provide the diagnosis.

The health ministry said one case had been registered in Kirkuk province, neighbouring Sulaimaniyah, while two were recorded in the southern province of Muthanna.

No deaths have yet been registered.

"Around 4,000 cases of diarrhoea and vomiting have been recorded in Sulaimaniyah hospitals" in the past six days, Hawrami told a press conference.

The provincial capital of Sulaimaniyah counts around one million people.

"Cholera is a terrible illness but can be easily treated. We can save lives in a matter of hours," he added.

The country's last broad outbreak "dates back to 2015", health ministry spokesman Seif al-Badr told AFP.

The central provinces of Baghdad and Babil to its south were the worst affected during that outbreak, with hundreds ill.

The last registered cholera cases in Sulaimaniyah [province](#) were in 2012.

Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal disease that is treatable with antibiotics

and hydration but can kill within hours without medical attention.

It is caused by a germ that is typically transmitted by poor sanitation. People become infected when they swallow food or water carrying the bug.

According to the World Health Organization, researchers estimate that annually there are between 1.3 million and four million cases of cholera worldwide, leading to between 21,000 and 143,000 deaths.

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