

## Cholera breaks out in Pakistan's violence-hit northwest

Health authorities were struggling to treat hundreds of patients affected by a cholera outbreak in Pakistan's conflict-ridden Swat mountain district, a media report said Friday.

At least 600 suspected cases were reported in the past three days in Swat, where security forces have been battling Islamist militants for nearly a year, the Aaj news channel said.

Two children admitted to a state-run hospital in Saidu Sharif died from cholera Thursday. The town appeared to be the worst-affected area as more than 100 patients were registered Friday.

Scores of people in the adjacent areas of Mingora and Saidu Sharif also complained of symptoms of the potentially fatal disease, which is mainly transmitted through contaminated water.

The supply of potable water piped from reservoirs was suspended to most parts of Swat two weeks ago after insurgents blew up a key grid station in Mingora, forcing a large number of people to use water from streams and underground sources.

Aaj said hospitals in the affected area were running out of medicine and also facing a shortage of staff.

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