



# PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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## SOUTHERN AFRICA IN DEATH SPIRAL FROM AIDS IMPACT, UN SAYS

*June 22, 2004* The Voice of America reported: "The United Nations says Southern Africa is in a death spiral because of the impact of AIDS on food shortages. The director of the U.N. World Food Program says that HIV/AIDS is greatly exacerbating the effects of food shortages in southern Africa. James Morris says over and above natural disasters, such as drought, AIDS is killing those who would normally produce the region's food. In addition, he says, the number of health and social workers dying from the disease is straining health and social services in the region.

Mr. Morris, who is also U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's special representative for humanitarian needs for southern Africa, was speaking in Johannesburg at the end of a tour to Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Zambia.

He said this region is the worst hit by the AIDS pandemic and that it has resulted in the world's greatest humanitarian crises. "You have more than five million people living with the infection. You have a prevalence rate of 24 percent on the average." Mr. Morris said as many as 600 people die of AIDS each day in South Africa.

He said the delegation did not visit Zimbabwe after it was told the government in Harare was too busy to receive the U.N. envoys. Zimbabwe recently declared it will produce a bumper harvest this year after several years of severe food shortages caused by the government's chaotic land resettlement program and a severe drought.

Mr. Morris said the United Nations will do its best to be prepared in the event the Zimbabwe government's expectations of a bumper harvest this year fail to materialize. But he said, Zimbabwe's ability to produce sufficient food will be hampered because of the prevalence of AIDS.

"Zimbabwe is a country that has a very high H.I.V. prevalence rate, probably something in the neighborhood of 34 percent, one of the five highest in the world. It is a country with at least 800,000 orphans because of H.I.V., it is a country that has its life expectancy rate nearly cut in half," he said..."

## WHO: AFRICA ON BRINK OF POLIO EPIDEMIC

*June 22, 2004* Voice of America reported: "World Health Organization polio experts warn west and central Africa is on the brink of the largest polio epidemic in recent years. The warning follows confirmation that a child was paralyzed on May 20 by polio in the Darfur region of the Sudan. The World Health Organization says polio is spreading at an alarming pace through west and central Africa. And this, it warns, is putting 74 million children at risk of getting this crippling disease.

At the beginning of 2003, only two countries in sub-Saharan Africa reported cases of polio. Now, dozens of children in 10 previously polio-free countries across the continent are paralyzed from polio.

The WHO says the virus is moving from Nigeria to other African countries. It blames this on the northern Islamic state of Kano, which last year stopped immunizing its children against polio. Religious and political leaders in Kano charged that the polio vaccine was contaminated with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS and could also lead to infertility in women.

The Global Coordinator of the WHO Polio Eradication Initiative, Bruce Aylward, says the virus now has spread as far east as Sudan and as far south as Botswana. On Monday, WHO confirmed 60 new cases of polio in Nigeria, bringing the total number of cases there to 257. He calls this the largest number of cases reported in a single week from any country in many years.

"What all that adds up to is a virus and an epidemic that is gathering speed, rather than slowing down at the end of the low season," he said. "And what is most alarming now is we could see Ψ thousands of children paralyzed across west and central Africa at a time when this disease should be eradicated."

WHO experts are particularly worried that polio has spread into Darfur in western Sudan, where more than one million people have been made homeless by war.

WHO Executive Director David Nabarro spoke on the phone from Darfur. "The news that there is polio just a few kilometers away from where I am standing is causing us all major concern Ψ," he said. "And it is quite clear from just looking at the people and talking to them as I have been all day, that the last thing these people need now is to be facing an outbreak of polio on top of all the other ravages they are facing which is truly awful." Dr. Nabarro says the World Health Organization, along with other U.N. and private agencies, will work together to increase the rate of polio immunization in Darfur.



Nine out of 10 polio cases in the world are in Africa and the remaining cases are reported from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Egypt.

WHO says it will need an additional \$100 million for an immunization campaign in 22 African countries in October and November.”

## EUROPE'S LEADERS CLINCH HISTORIC DEAL

*June 19, 2004* The Guardian “EU leaders last night finally clinched their historic agreement on a first Europe-wide constitution on terms allowing Tony Blair to declare that Britain's national interests had been preserved and fear of a "federal superstate" banished. After a day of tension and frustration the prime minister and his 24 fellow heads of government emerged from the Brussels summit shortly before midnight to confirm agreement on the draft constitution - while admitting stalemate on the choice of a European commission president.

"This is important because a new Europe is taking shape in which Britain can build alliances and feel at home; a Europe in which there is no one dominant view; a Europe in which there is flexible and diverse progress," Mr Blair told reporters. His evident relief that another summit had not ended in humiliating stalemate was tempered by the acknowledgement he will now have to sell the deal to a wary British public in the referendum which must be held in 2006.

"No one who looks seriously at this treaty can say it is a ramp for a federal superstate. It is a new Europe. You can feel the difference with these new countries round the table," Mr Blair said. But he admitted that victory in the promised referendum would "depend on whether people hear and listen to what is in the treaty."

Mr Blair and Jack Straw, the foreign secretary, insisted the UK's national veto on tax, social security, foreign and defence policies had been retained, and the powers of the EU court over economic and social issues constrained.

The French president, Jacques Chirac, said: "This is an important day for Europe. We have a Europe that is more efficient, that answers better to the needs of our citizens."

Neither leader made much attempt to deny the continued deadlock over the choice of a new president for the Brussels commission - with Mr Blair leading a six-nation bloc against the French-backed Belgian candidate and Mr Chirac giving the thumbs down to Britain's Chris Patten.

The prime minister said his rejection of the Belgian premier and anti-American federalist, Guy Verhofstadt, meant "no disrespect". Mr Chirac is now promoting Michel Barnier, the lacklustre French foreign minister, against the Portuguese prime minister, Jose Manuel Durao Baroso.

So bad were ill-feelings that No 10 is refusing to say who it backs for the job - for fear of ruining their chances...”

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## SUPERBUGS RESIST "LAST RESORT" ANTIBIOTICS

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*June 18, 2004* The New Scientist reported: “Hospital superbugs with resistance to a "last resort" antibiotic have emerged independently in at least eight different countries, reveals a new study. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a major problem worldwide. It is highly resistant to most antibiotics, with the exception of vancomycin, which could be relied upon to kill the superbug. An MRSA bug with increased resistance to vancomycin was discovered in 1997. But until now this resistance was thought to be emerging in only one type of MRSA.



"The results of our study show that the problem is much more serious than was previously thought," says Mark Enright, at the University of Bath, UK, who led the study. "It's only a matter of time, perhaps just years, before bacteria that cannot be killed by vancomycin develop in some areas," he says. "There have already been three cases of this in the US, but we believe these will become more common."

MRSA is a resistant strain of Staphylococcus aureus, a common bacterium found in the noses or skin of healthy people. It can occasionally cause skin infections - such as boils or pimples - which can usually be treated without antibiotics. But the bug can also cause serious infections, and over the last 50 years the bacteria have become resistant to various antibiotics.

Enright and his team studied 101 MRSA samples, which were known to be either fully or partially resistant to vancomycin. The samples came from eight countries; France, UK, Norway, Poland, US, Japan, Sweden and China...”

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