



Victims of the cholera epidemic in Haiti have given the United Nations a 60 day deadline to start talks about compensation or face legal action. The victims, including the families of 8,000 dead and hundreds of thousands of people who have fallen sick, accuse the UN of allowing soldiers to pollute Haiti's water supply with cholera. BBC correspondent Mark Doyle reports.

The **cholera epidemic** began in Haiti near a camp for UN soldiers where there were leaking **sewage** pipes. Some human waste was also dumped outside the camp near a river. One of the UN's own experts on cholera, Danielle Lantagne, told the BBC it was "most likely" the disease **originated** in the UN camp. It housed UN soldiers from Nepal, where cholera is **endemic**.

The UN rejected an earlier call for compensation in this **unprecedented** case against the world body, saying it was **immune** from such claims. But the victims' lawyers say the UN is breaking international law. If **mediation talks** don't begin within 60 days, the lawyers say, they'll open legal proceedings in New York with claims totalling many billions of dollars.

The lawyers say they'll file claims for \$100,000 for the families of those who have lost a loved one and \$50,000 for every one of the hundreds of thousands of people who have fallen sick. The UN has said very little on the matter, apart from **to insist** it is immune from legal proceedings. At the same time, it may also be true that the United Nations simply doesn't know what to do in the face of what could have been a series of **catastrophic** and deadly errors. In private, UN officials say they're facing a moral crisis. Now they may be about to confront a very public legal battle as well.

Vocabulary and definitions

cholera	a serious disease, caused by drinking infected water
epidemic	when a disease spreads without control
sewage	human waste
originated	started
endemic	present in a particular area
unprecedented	something which has never happened before
immune	not able to be affected by something bad; protected
mediation talks	conversations to help reach an agreement
to insist	to say something with force
catastrophic	extremely harmful

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http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2013/05/130510_witn_haiti_cholera.shtml

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