

Saudis say virus does not pose threat to pilgrims

October 1 2012

(AP)—Saudi Arabia's health minister says a new respiratory virus related to SARS that has infected two people does not pose a threat to the more than 1 million Muslims set to embark on the annual Hajj pilgrimage in the kingdom.

Abdullah al-Rabeeah said Monday the virus has so far been contained.

The germ is a coronavirus, from a family of viruses that cause the common cold as well as SARS, the [severe acute respiratory syndrome](#) that killed some 800 people, mostly in Asia, in a 2003 epidemic.

Global health officials suspect two victims from the Middle East may have caught it from animals.

The [World Health Organization](#) issued a global alert asking doctors to be on guard for any potential cases of the new virus, which also causes [kidney failure](#).

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Citation: Saudis say virus does not pose threat to pilgrims (2012, October 1) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-10-saudis-virus-pose-threat-pilgrims.html>

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