

Jordanian dies of MERS virus

February 8 2014

A man has died in Jordan after being infected with the MERS virus, the kingdom's first fatality from the respiratory disease in more than a year, news reports said Saturday.

Another man was reported to have died of the H1N1 virus, or swine flu.

"Two men in their eighties have died in Jordan, one from the coronavirus MERS and the other from H1N1," the daily Al-Rai cited [health ministry](#) official Bassam Hajawi as saying.

It quoted him as saying the ministry had "raised precautionary and alert levels across the kingdom".

Saudi Arabia is by far the worst affected country from MERS—Middle East Respiratory Syndrome—accounting for 59 deaths out of 180 confirmed cases.

It has also struck in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

The death in Jordan was the country's third, after two previous fatalities in 2012.

Experts are struggling to understand MERS, for which there is no vaccine.

It is considered a deadlier but less-transmissible cousin of the SARS virus that erupted in Asia in 2003 and infected 8,273 people, nine

percent of whom died.

Last August, researchers pointed to Arabian camels as possible hosts of the virus.

Cases have also been reported in Europe in Britain, France, Germany, Italy, mainly in people who had visited the Middle East.

Hajawi was quoted on Saturday as saying it was not known how the Jordanian man became infected.

"It is possible he contracted the virus while abroad, two months before the symptoms appeared," he said, adding that the patient also had leukaemia.

On January 29, Saudi Arabia announced a new MERS death, bringing to 59 the number of people who have died from the coronavirus there.

The health ministry said the 60-year-old Saudi national died in hospital in the Riyadh region, adding that he had suffered from chronic disease.

At the end of last month, the World Health Organisation said it had been informed of 180 cases of MERS infection worldwide, including 77 deaths.

Like SARS, MERS appears to cause a lung infection, with patients suffering from a temperature, cough and breathing difficulties.

But it differs in that it also causes rapid kidney failure and the extremely high death rate has caused serious concern.

Of the swine flu case, the Jordanian health ministry official said 25 cases had been treated successfully in the country this winter.

He added that the man who died had also suffered from cardiac problems. H1N1 has claimed the lives of 29 Jordanians down the years.

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