

MERS death toll reaches 61 in Saudi

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Saudi health authorities announced on Sunday the death of an elderly woman from the MERS coronavirus, bringing the death toll from the respiratory disease in the kingdom to 61.

The 81-year-old, who died from the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome in Riyadh, was suffering from several chronic illnesses, the health ministry website said.

Saudi Arabia, the country worst hit by MERS, has recorded 147 cases, of which 61 have now proven fatal, since the virus first appeared in September 2012.

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

MERS 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.

The World Health Organisation says it has been told of 182 cases of MERS infection worldwide, including 79 deaths.

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