

Venezuela says 3 dead from Zika complications

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Xiojanni Badillo embraces her aunt Daysi Mendoza who's recovering from Guillain-Barre syndrome, a disorder in which the immune system attacks nerve cells, at the Erasmo Meoz Hospital in Cucuta, Colombia, Thursday, Feb. 11, 2016, a city on the border with Venezuela. Mendoza, a Venezuelan who crossed the border for treatment, was diagnosed with the Zika virus days before showing Guillain-Barre symptoms. According to the Health Institute of Norte de Santander state, 30 cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome were diagnosed in the state since a Zika outbreak, a 10 time increase in the state's yearly average. (AP Photo/Ricardo Mazalan)

Venezuela has announced the first Zika-related deaths in the South American country.

President Nicolas Maduro said on Thursday that at least three people have died in Venezuela due to complications related to the mosquito-borne Zika virus. He added that 68 people have been hospitalized with complications confirmed to be related to the virus.

Maduro did not say what the [complications](#) were or how the deaths had been confirmed to be Zika-related.

Venezuela is reporting more than 5,000 suspected cases of Zika since November of last year. Local health organizations say the real number of Zika is likely much higher.

Investigators are studying a possible link to Guillain-Barre syndrome, which can cause temporary paralysis and is sometimes fatal, and to birth defects.

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