

# Honduras reports first death from Zika-linked syndrome

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Honduras on Friday reported its first death from a paralyzing illness linked to the Zika virus, a mosquito-borne epidemic that is spreading through Latin America and also suspected of causing birth defects.

The person died from Guillain-Barre syndrome, a neurological disorder that results from the body's immune system attacking part of the nervous system, leading to muscle weakness which can be severe or fatal.

Honduras' deputy health minister, Francis Contreras, did not identify the victim, but said he or she was among 57 patients diagnosed with Guillain-Barre.

He said the person had been in the north of Honduras, but did not say where exactly so as not to cause panic or stigmatize the area.

Although Zika has not been definitively proved to cause Guillain-Barre or microcephaly, a severe deformation of baby's brains, the World Health Organization strongly suspects it does.

Contreras said Honduras has diagnosed 185 pregnant women with Zika.

He said more than 27,000 people in the country were affected by the illness and dengue and chikungunya, two other diseases transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.

There is currently no vaccine for the Zika virus, and affected countries

are focusing on wiping out mosquito populations in an effort to curb its spread.

According to the World Health Organization, 41 countries or territories have reported transmission of Zika within their borders since last year, and nine have reported an increase in Guillain-Barre cases.

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