

Curacao vows to stop measles spreading from Scientology ship (Update)

May 3 2019

The Dutch territory of Curacao said Saturday it would do what was needed to prevent measles spreading from a Scientology cruise ship, after a crew member came down with the disease.

The Freewinds, which left the Caribbean island of St. Lucia on Friday, arrived back in its home port of Curacao at around 9:00 am (1300 GMT) Saturday, according to myshiptracking.com.

The Curacao government said in a statement that it would "take all necessary precautions to handle the case of measles on board of the Freewinds," including vaccinations.

"An investigation will also be done to determine who will be allowed to leave the ship without (posing) a threat to the population of Curacao," it said.

"It is imperative to make all efforts to prevent a spread of this disease internationally."

The Church of Scientology says the 440-foot (134-meter) vessel is used for religious retreats and is normally based in Curacao.

The vessel had arrived in St Lucia from Curacao on Tuesday, when it was placed under quarantine by health authorities because of a measles patient, said to be a female crew member.

The resurgence of the once-eradicated, highly contagious disease is linked to the growing anti-vaccine movement in richer nations, which the World Health Organization (WHO) has identified as a major global health threat.

There were about 300 people aboard the ship, according to Saint Lucia authorities, which placed the vessel in quarantine. They said they provided 100 doses of measles vaccine at no cost.

The church, founded by science fiction writer L Ron Hubbard in 1953, did not respond to requests for comment.

Its teachings do not directly oppose vaccination, but followers consider illness a sign of personal failing and generally avoid medical interventions.

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