Algeria registers first coronavirus death

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Algeria has registered its first death from the novel coronavirus, the health ministry announced Thursday, as schools were closed for three weeks.

The man, aged 67, had heart disease, the ministry's director general,

Djamel Fourar, told reporters.

Another five new COVID-19 cases have been recorded, bringing the total number of confirmed cases on Algerian soil to 24, the ministry said.

A 25th case—and the first registered in the country—was an Italian who tested positive in February but has since left Algeria.

Of the five new cases, two are Algerians who had been in France.

They have been hospitalised in the Souk Ahras area of eastern Algeria and the Kabylie region, also east of Algiers.

The three others were being treated in a hospital in the Blida area, southwest of the capital, the health ministry said.

Seventeen members of the same family in Blida have also been infected with the virus, in connection with confirmed cases among Algerians living in France.

The man whose death was announced Thursday was related to the family from Blida, Fourar said.

The health ministry urged Algerians returning from countries with high infection rates to postpone "family visits unless absolutely necessary".

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, for his part, ordered all Algerian schools to close from Thursday until April 5, his office said.

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