

## WHO tracing 98 passengers on flight with hantavirus victim

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 07 May, 2026



**Dhaka: The World Health Organization (WHO) is urgently working to trace up to 98 passengers who shared an Airlink flight, 4Z132, with a Dutch woman who died from hantavirus infection, as the agency monitors a growing cluster of cases linked to the cruise ship MV Hondius.**

In an update on May 6, the WHO said eight cases were recorded in total — three laboratory-confirmed and five suspected. Three individuals — a Dutch couple and a German national — have died after contracting the Andes strain of hantavirus.

The Dutch woman died upon arriving at an emergency department on April 26, one day after flying from the South Atlantic island of Saint Helena to Johannesburg, South Africa. Her condition had deteriorated mid-flight, with gastrointestinal symptoms reported. She had been in

close contact with her husband, who died on April 11 with symptoms of respiratory distress.

"Contact tracing for passengers on the flight has been initiated," the agency said.

The Dutch couple had traveled across South America, including Argentina, before boarding the MV Hondius on April 1. The vessel departed from Ushuaia, Argentina, and stopped at multiple remote locations, including mainland Antarctica and the Atlantic islands of Tristan da Cunha and Saint Helena, before the outbreak emerged.

Hantavirus typically spreads through contact with infected rodents or their urine, droppings, and saliva. The Andes strain, however, is known to allow limited person-to-person transmission and is primarily found in parts of Argentina.

The ship, carrying nearly 150 passengers, is now heading to Spain's Canary Islands as the country's authorities have agreed to welcome the vessel for a full epidemiological investigation, complete disinfection, and passenger risk assessment.

Passengers still aboard are remaining in their cabins as a precautionary measure while disinfection and other public health protocols are carried out.

"WHO will continue to work with countries to ensure that the patients, contacts, passengers and crew have the information and support they need to stay safe and prevent spread," the agency said.

As of now, the WHO has currently assessed the risk of the outbreak to the global population as low, while epidemiological investigations remain ongoing.

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