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Bolivia, Uruguay confirm first coronavirus deaths

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MONTEVIDEO/LA PAZ (Reuters) - Uruguay and Bolivia have confirmed their first deaths related to coronavirus, as many Latin America countries go into lockdown in a bid to mitigate the impact of the global pandemic that has infected nearly 700,000 people worldwide and killed over 30,000.

Bolivia's health minister Aníbal Cruz said on Sunday that a 78-year-old woman in the lowland city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the region most affected, had died of severe respiratory distress after contracting the virus from a family member.

"We recommend that the population take care of our older adults who are the most vulnerable and sensitive to this disease," Cruz told reporters.

Bolivia, which has 81 confirmed cases, has taken aggressive measures to slow the spread of the disease including a nationwide quarantine and closing the country's borders.

Nearby Uruguay also reported its first coronavirus death, while total cases climbed above 300 in the grains and cattle producer, which has a population of around 3.5 million people.

The country's health ministry said in a report that a 71-year-old former electoral court minister, Rodolfo González Rissotto, had died after contracting the virus.

An 82-year-old Uruguayan woman who died earlier in March was found to have had the virus, but her death was attributed to the terminal cancer she was suffering.

Chilean authorities reported a total of 2,139 confirmed cases on Sunday after the number had passed one thousand on Wednesday. The copper-rich country has recorded seven deaths.

Neighboring Argentina, which has imposed a nationwide quarantine, has 745 confirmed cases with 19 deaths, though the number of cases rose by the smallest margin in five days on Saturday, data from the health ministry showed.

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