Iran: 43 infected with coronavirus; patient zero identified

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Iran has confirmed 15 new cases of the new coronavirus, taking the total to 43 with a death toll of eight, reports *Reuters*. Most of the infections have been in the Shia Muslim holy city of Qom.

According to the Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki:

> The virus came from China to Qom city. A Merchant from Qom who died of the virus used to regularly travel to China … Flights were suspended between the two countries but he used indirect flights.

He urged people to avoid traveling to Qom, a major destination for Shia pilgrims 120 km (75 miles) south of the capital Tehran.

“Obviously we do not recommend trips to Qom or any other holy Shia cities in Iran,” Namaki said on state television.

Health Ministry spokesman Kianush Jahanpur announced the 15 new cases earlier on Sunday.

“So far, we have 43 infected cases and the death toll is eight,” he told the television.

Eight of the new infections were in Qom, where authorities have shut down schools and religious seminaries. In Tehran and some other cities, schools have been closed until Tuesday.