

## **Stop support to Taliban: Afghan president Ashraf Ghani to Pakistan**

11/08/2015 11:07 by admin

**Kabul,Afghanistan:** The Afghan president called on Pakistan on Monday to crack down on the Taliban after a suicide car bombing earlier in the day near Kabul's international airport killed five people, the latest in a wave of deadly attacks in the capital.

In a televised address, Ashraf Ghani also blamed neighboring Pakistan for what he described as Islamabad's support to the insurgents whose war against Kabul is now nearing its 14th year, and said he was sending a delegation to Islamabad later this week to demand a stop to this.

"We know they have sanctuaries there, we know they are active there," Ghani said, referring to Taliban leaders living in Pakistan. "We need all those activities to be stopped."

There was no immediate reaction from Islamabad. Pakistan has in the past denied supporting the Taliban.

Since assuming office a year ago, Ghani has pursued closer relations with Pakistan, which wields influence over the insurgent group, hoping that it could use that influence to bring the Taliban into peace negotiations.

Pakistan hosted the first official round of Kabul-Taliban negotiations last month, but a second round that was due at the end of last month was indefinitely postponed after the Afghan government announced the death over two years ago of the reclusive Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar.

The one-eyed Mullah Omar had hosted Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaida in the years leading up to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. He had not been seen in public since fleeing over the border into Pakistan after the 2001 U.S.-led invasion that ousted the Taliban. Since the announcement of his death, the Taliban have been torn by infighting and rivalries for the leadership post.

On Monday, Ghani appeared to take a step back on the peace talks.

"We don't want Pakistan to bring the Taliban to peace talks, but to stop the Taliban's activities on their soil," he said.

Only hours earlier, a suicide car bombing at a busy roundabout near the entrance to the Kabul airport killed at least five people and wounded 16, officials said. The Taliban quickly claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Kabul provincial police chief, Abdul Rahman Rahimi, told The Associated Press that a car packed with explosives blew up at the busy intersection.

It was the latest in a series of deadly attacks on the capital, which since Friday have killed more than 50 people and wounded hundreds.

The Taliban have claimed responsibility for all the attacks but one — a truck bomb explosion that flattened a city block, killed 15 people and wounded 240 as they slept in the early hours of Friday.

It is widely believed the truck in that attack detonated prematurely — CCTV footage shown on Afghan television purportedly showed the truck hitting a speed bump and then blowing up.

Earlier this month, the Afghan intelligence service disclosed that Mullah Omar had been dead for more than two years. The disclosure, later confirmed by the Taliban, triggered the internal succession dispute and raised questions about the future direction of the insurgency.

Ghani said the recent attacks showed "the war has changed shape."

"The enemy who was fighting to gain territory and claim victory, has now had its backbone broken," he said of the insurgent group. "It is so desperate now that it has turned to cowardly attacks against innocent people just to weaken people's morale."

- AP