

Truck bombing at Baghdad market kills 67; Islamic State claims blast

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Baghdad: A massive truck bomb ripped through a popular Baghdad food market in a predominantly Shiite neighbourhood early today morning, killing at least 67 people, police officials said.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the blast, saying it targeted a gathering place of Shiites and vowed more attacks.

The truck detonated in the Jameela market in the Iraqi capital's crowded Sadr City neighbourhood shortly after dawn, according to two local police officers.

They also said that at least 152 people were wounded in the attack. The market is the main center for produce and food sales in the Iraqi capital.

Residents of the Shiite community rushed to help the victims, carrying corpses in garbage bags and blankets, and sent the wounded to local hospitals in ambulances or personal cars.

The blast incinerated much of the market, leaving charred wooden market stalls and scattering fruits and vegetables far around it.

Fire trucks and ambulances were at the scene and fire men were dousing the still-smoldering complex with water long after the explosion.

"On Thursdays the market is especially crowded because people come from the other provinces to stock up on food for the weekend," one of the officers said.

He said the truck that set off the explosion was a refrigeration truck, so it was impossible to distinguish it from other trucks delivering produce to the market.

A minibus driver, Hassan Hamid, said he driving not far from the area when the force of the explosion threw his vehicle about 10 meters (yards) away and onto the sidewalk.

"This is the strongest explosion I've ever seen in my life," said the 37-year old father of three, speaking from his hospital bed where he was being treated for shrapnel injuries.

"I saw some cars were thrown into the sky and a fire erupted all over the place."

Four hospital officials confirmed the casualty figures. All officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

In a message posted on an IS-affiliated Twitter account, the Islamic State said the attack was carried out by a parked, explosives-laden truck. The claim says the Islamic State seeks to have the "rejectionists (Shiites) experience the same harm as their bombardments cause to our Muslim people."

- AP