

Car bomb kills 5 in Syria's Kurdish city

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Damascus: A car bomb went off in the predominantly Kurdish city of Al Qamishli in northeastern Syria on Saturday, killing at least five people, pro-government Sama TV reported.

The car bomb hit a checkpoint of the Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG, at the al-Hilaliyeh roundabout in Al Qamishli in the northeastern province of al-Hasakah.

The state news agency SANA reported the explosion, without giving a death toll, according to Xinhua.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said a powerful explosion was heard in the Hilaliyeh district west of Al Qamishli, adding that the preliminary information indicated the presence of several casualties.

The Kurds, who make up 15 percent of Syria's 23 million inhabitants with most living in the north of the embattled country, have been trying to keep their areas away from military operations.

In 2012, Syrian troops withdrew from most of the Kurdish areas, and Kurdish militia took over local security. The government, however, is still in control of vital areas in the city of Qamishli and the al-Hasakah province.

Following the surge of the IS militants in July 2014 and their capture of Kurdish areas in northern Syria, the US-led coalition begun to help the Kurds in their battles against the extremists.

Last month, the Kurds voted in favour of establishing a federal region, which would include the areas in northern Syria on a triangular basis of the predominantly Kurdish strongholds of Kobani, Afrin and the al-Jazeera region.

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