

Lahore blast: Nine cops among 26 dead in suicide attack claimed by TTP

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Lahore: At least 26 people have been declared dead and 58 others reported injured in an explosion that struck a police team near residence-cum-office of Pakistan's Punjab province Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif in Lahore. The explosion took place near the Arfa Karim IT Tower on Lahore's Ferozepur Road. The deceased include eight policemen and at least one woman. Lahore police chief Capt (R) Amin Wains confirmed that it was a suicide attack and the "target was police".

Rescue vehicle at the site of suicide bombing in Lahore

"A suicide bomber on a motorcycle approached the police contingent deployed at the anti-encroachment drive outside the Arfa Karim Tower, near the CM's Model Town residence, and blew himself up," Wains said.

He said at least 26 people, including nine policemen, were killed in the blast that also wounded 58 others. One Sub-Inspector, 1 ASI and 7 Constables were among the dead.

The chief minister, who is also the brother of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, was in a meeting at his Model Town office when the blast took place.

The Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed the responsibility for the attack.

"Fida Hussain Swati - a member of our suicide squad - today attacked the infidels on a motorcycle," TTP spokesman Muhammad Khurasani said in a statement. "Our message to the front line allies of infidels not to come in our way as we will impose Allah's system on this land." he added.

The Lahore police chief said initial investigation showed that the bomber used some 10-kg explosive in his suicide vest.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa condemned the blast and vowed to continue war on terrorism in Pakistan till elimination of the last terrorist.

"No words can express the grief which grips my heart now. Blast destroyed many families but terrorists can never destroy our resolve," Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif said.

"Our blood was spilt on the street but I swear to my Allah that the blood of our innocent martyrs will write end of these cowardly assassins!," he tweeted.

Rescue 1122 spokesperson Deeba Shahnaz told PTI that police and Lahore Development Authority officials were busy in removing encroachments outside the Arfa Karim Tower near Model Town when the powerful blast took place at 3.55 PM. She said 20 people died on the spot while remaining six succumbed to their injuries in hospitals.

"Causalities may rise as the condition of at least five injured is stated to be critical," she said.

Emergency was declared in the city hospitals and people were appealed to donate blood. Army personnel also participated in the rescue operation.

The government of Pakistan's Punjab province gave out specific details of the number of deceased and injured in a

series of tweets on its official handle. The thread also detailed the hospitals and the number of deceased and injured in each of them.

The area has been cordoned off by a heavy contingent of security forces and the section of the road has been sealed.

Opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party leader Imran Khan announced two-day mourning saying no political activity would be held till Wednesday.

Lahore, the cultural capital of Pakistan, has witnessed several terror attacks in recent years.

In April, six persons were killed and 15 others injured when a suicide bomber targeted a population census team in Lahore's Bedian Road.

In February, a suicide bomber killed 14 people, including senior police officers, near the Punjab Assembly here.

- (With PTI inputs)