

## **Suicide bomber targets clerics in Afghan capital, 40 killed**

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Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish says hundreds of scholars and clerics had gathered to mark the occasion in a large wedding hall in the capital.

**Afghan policeman keep watch at the site of a suicide attack in Kabul, Afghanistan November 20, 2018.**  
**REUTERS**

**Kabul:** Afghan officials say a suicide bomber has targeted a gathering of Muslim religious scholars in Kabul, killing at least 40 people.

Public Health Ministry spokesman Wahid Majroh says another 60 people were wounded in the attack, which took place as Muslims around the world marked the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad.

Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish says hundreds of scholars and clerics had gathered to mark the occasion in a large wedding hall in the capital.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but both the Taliban and a local Islamic State affiliate have targeted religious scholars aligned with the government in the past.

IS claimed a suicide bombing in June that targeted a meeting of the country's top clerics in the capital. That attack killed at least seven people and wounded 20.

The body of religious leaders targeted in June, known as the Afghan Ulema Council, had issued a decree against suicide attacks and called for peace talks.

IS said it had targeted "tyrant clerics" who were siding with the U.S.-backed government.

The Taliban denied involvement in the June attack but they also denounced the gathering.

Both militant groups want to overthrow the U.S.-backed government and impose a harsh form of Islamic rule, but they are bitterly divided over leadership and ideology, and they have clashed on a number of occasions.

- AP