

Afghan journalist wounded in bombing; 10 troops killed

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Radio and TV journalist Nesar Ahmad Ahmadi was wounded when a sticky bomb attached to his car exploded as he was heading to work in Helmand province.

An Afghan National Army soldier keeps watch at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Kabul, Afghanistan. (Reuters File Photo: Omar Sobhani)

Kabul: An Afghan journalist who has long received death threats was seriously wounded in a bombing in the country's south, while in the western province of Farah, the Taliban stormed an army checkpoint and killed 10 soldiers, officials said Wednesday.

Also in Farah, a local official was gunned down outside his home on Wednesday, a councilman said.

The attacks were the latest violence in war-torn Afghanistan even as the Taliban and the US concluded another round of negotiations held in Qatar, with both sides reporting progress in the talks.

Radio and TV journalist Nesar Ahmad Ahmadi was wounded when a sticky bomb attached to his car exploded as he was heading to work in Helmand province.

Omar Zwak, the governor's spokesman, said the attack happened on Tuesday in Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital.

Ahmadi had a leg wound and was transferred to Kabul for further treatment, the spokesman said.

He runs the Sabahoon radio station and is also a reporter for Sabahoon TV in Helmand.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack in Helmand, the Taliban heartland.

Afghan journalists are often targeted in attacks. In January, the Afghan Journalist Safety Committee said in its annual report that it had recorded a total of 121 cases of violence against journalists and media workers in 2018.

It also said 17 journalists and media workers were killed last year, once again placing Afghanistan as the world's most dangerous country for journalists.

The International Federation of Journalists and its Afghan affiliate condemned the attack on Ahmadi in Helmand and called for an immediate investigation.

In the attack in western Farah province, the Taliban stormed an army checkpoint along the main highway in Gulistan district on Tuesday, killing 10 soldiers, said Abdul Samad Salehi, a member of the provincial council.

Reinforcements were sent and the area was retaken and brought under control but five or six other troops remain missing, Salehi added.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the attack in Farah.

On Wednesday, also in Farah, Mohammad Salim Farahi was shot and killed near his home in the provincial capital, Farah city.

He was an engineer and the head of the public works department, said Salehi.

Despite intensified negotiations between the US and the Taliban to end the 17-year war in Afghanistan, the insurgents have been carrying out near-daily attacks across the country, mainly targeting the government and security forces and causing staggering casualties.

The nearly two weeks of talks in Qatar produced two draft agreements between the Taliban and the US government on a "withdrawal timeline and effective counterterrorism measures," American envoy Zalmay Khalilzad wrote on Twitter.

The Taliban also issued a statement, saying "progress was achieved" on both of those issues. However, the Taliban have consistently refused to talk with the government in Kabul, describing it as a US puppet.

The talks concluded late Tuesday. It wasn't immediately clear when the next round of talks would take place.

- AP