

Bomb blast kills 40 people in Syrian town of Afrin, Turkey says

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At least 40 civilians were killed, including 11 children, when a bomb detonated in the northern Syrian town of Afrin on Tuesday. (Representational Photo)

Ankara: At least 40 civilians were killed, including 11 children, when a bomb detonated in the northern Syrian town of Afrin on Tuesday, the Turkish Defence Ministry said, blaming the attack on the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia.

In a statement on Twitter, the ministry said the blast occurred in a crowded area in Afrin's centre. A video shared by the ministry showed black smoke billowing in the air while ambulance and police sirens wailed in the background.

The United States condemned the attack late on Tuesday, which State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said claimed "the lives of dozens of people shopping in the central market as they prepared to break the Ramadan fast."

"Initial reports indicate many victims were civilians, including children," she said in the statement, reiterating a U.S. call for a nationwide ceasefire in Syria. "Such cowardly acts of evil are unacceptable from any side in this conflict."

Ankara views the YPG as a terrorist group linked to Kurdish militants on its own soil and has mounted military operations in northern Syria to push it back from the border.

Turkey's military and its Syrian rebel allies seized Afrin, a mainly Kurdish district, from the YPG in March 2018 in a major offensive.

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- Reuters