

Islamic State claims responsibility for deadly twin blasts in Baghdad

22/01/2021 19:19 by admin

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*An Iraqi security force member walks near the damage site in the aftermath of a twin suicide bombing attack in a central market, in Baghdad, Iraq January 22, 2021. (Reuters)*Â Â Â

Baghdad: The Islamic State has claimed responsibility for a rare and deadly twin suicide bombing that rocked central Baghdad killing over 30 and wounding dozens.

The group said the bombing â€targeted apostate Shiites,â€ on a statement circulating in an IS-affiliated website late Thursday. The statement said the first bombing was carried out by Abu Youssef al-Ansari and the second by Mohammed Arif al-Muhajir.

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According to officials, the first suicide bomber cried out loudly that he was ill in the middle of the bustling market, prompting a crowd to gather around him ? and thatâ€™s when he detonated his explosive belt. The second detonated shortly after.

Mourners gather near the coffin of a man, who was killed in a twin suicide bombing attack in a central Baghdad market, during a funeral in Najaf, Iraq, January 21, 2021. (Reuters)

The US-led coalition recently ceased combat activities and is gradually drawing down its troop presence in Iraq, sparking fears of an IS resurgence. The group has rarely been able to penetrate the capital since being dislodged by Iraqi forces and the U.S.-led coalition in 2017.

The attack was the first in nearly three years to hit the capital. Elsewhere, in northern Iraq and the western desert, attacks continue and almost exclusively target Iraqi security forces.

An increase in attacks was seen last summer as militants took advantage of the governmentâ€™s focus on tackling the coronavirus pandemic and exploited security gaps across disputed territory in northern Iraq.

- AP