

Beat: Miscellaneous

Bomb blast kills 83, injures nearly 200 at market in southwest Pakistan

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USPA News - A powerful bomb blast targeted Shiite Muslims at a crowded market in southwestern Pakistan on Saturday evening, killing at least 83 people and injuring nearly 200 others, officials said on Sunday. It follows a deadly attack last month in the same city.

The attack happened at around 6 p.m. local time when a powerful explosion ripped through a vegetable market on the outskirts of Quetta, the largest city and provincial capital of Balochistan. The neighborhood is dominated by Hazara Shittes who are commonly targeted by extremist Sunni groups. Police said an estimated 800 to 1,000 kilograms (1,760 to 2,200 pounds) of explosives had been planted in a water tank which was towed to the market by a tractor. The huge explosion caused a nearby two-story building to collapse and severely damaged shops, vehicles and other buildings near the market. Police said at least 83 people were confirmed to have been killed, including an unknown number of children. More than 190 people were also injured in the explosion, but doctors said many of them remained in a critical condition on Sunday morning and it is feared the death toll will increase. Quetta's Capital City Police Officer Mir Zubair Mehmood said a number of people may still be trapped under the rubble of the collapsed building. He said rescue work was continuing on Sunday morning and said it was unclear how many people could still be trapped, but he said it is unlikely there would be survivors. Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari strongly condemned the attack and instructed local authorities to provide the best possible medical assistance to those who have been injured. "He expressed sympathies with the bereaved families and reiterated the resolve of the Government to continue its fight against the militants undeterred till its logical conclusion," a statement said. Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf also expressed his condemnation and reiterated the government's resolve to "fight and eliminate the menace of terrorism" from Pakistan. He added that terrorists will not be able to subdue Pakistan's will "through such dastardly acts," according to his office. The Sunni militant group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) claimed responsibility for Saturday's attack, which was the worst in Quetta since two suicide bombers blew themselves up inside a crowded pool bar in Quetta on January 10. The attack, also claimed by LeJ, killed at least 93 people and wounded more than 120 others.

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