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## Triple bombing near Syria Shiite shrine kills 50

January 31, 2016

Three bomb explosions near the Shiite shrine of Sayyida Zeinab outside the Syrian capital killed 50 people and injured 110 yesterday.

News agency Sana said that the first blast was caused by a car bomb that went off at a nearby bus station.

Two suicide bombers then detonated explosive belts when people gathered at the scene.

ISIL claimed responsibility for the attacks, saying two of its members had detonated the explosives.

The blasts tore a massive crater in the road, overturned and mangled cars and a bus and shattered windows.

The shrine south of the capital contains the grave of a granddaughter of the Prophet Mohammed and is revered by Shiites.

It has attracted pilgrims from Syria and beyond, particularly Shiites from Iran, Lebanon, and Iraq, throughout the five-year civil war, and was a target for bombers before.

Last February, two suicide attackers killed four people and wounded 13 at a checkpoint near the shrine.

That same month, a bomb went off in a bus carrying Lebanese Shiites going to Sayyida Zeinab, killing nine people in an attack claimed by Al Qaeda affiliate Al Nusra Front.

There was no claim of responsibility for yesterday's attack.

The area around Sayyida Zeinab is heavily secured, with government checkpoints set up hundreds of metres away to prevent vehicles from going close.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, members of Hizbollah, Lebanon's Shiite militant group, were among those deployed at the checkpoints.

The Britain-based Observatory said 63 people were killed in yesterday's blasts, among them 29 civilians, including five children.

It also said 25 non-Syrian Shiite militants were among the dead.

Hizbollah is a staunch ally of Syrian president Bashar Al Assad and has sent fighters to bolster his troops against the uprising that began in March 2011 with anti-government protests.

More than 260,000 people have been killed in the conflict, which has displaced more than half the country's population internally and abroad.