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Al Jazeera

## Scores killed in Pakistan twin bomb attacks

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Twin bomb blasts targeting a paramilitary training centre in northwest Pakistan have killed at least 76 people, mostly paramilitary personnel, and wounded at least 106 others, police and local officials say.

A police official said Friday's attack in Charsadda district appeared to be the work of two suicide bombers, though there was a possibility of the second bomb being planted.

The Pakistani Taliban has claimed responsibility for the attack, terming it the "first revenge" for the killing of Osama bin Laden, the al-Qaeda leader who was killed by US forces in Abbottabad on May 2.

"This was the first revenge for Osama's martyrdom. Wait for bigger attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan," Ehsanullah Ehsan, a spokesman for the group, told the AFP news agency.

The bombers attacked the Frontier Constabulary fort at Shabqadar early in the morning, attacking the men as they exited the fort to board buses and coaches. The attackers were riding motorbikes, with the first bomber striking at about 5:55am (0055GMT).



The second explosion took place about eight minutes later, killing and wounding many of those who had rushed to the aid of the victims of the first blast.

Some of the wounded were in critical condition and were moved to the Lady Reading hospital in Peshawar, the capital of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, Al Jazeera's correspondent Kamal Hyder reported.

Nisar Khan Marwat, the district police chief for Charsadda, told AFP that most of those killed were FC personnel, but that civilians had also died.

"Sixty-five of them are from the paramilitary police. Five dead bodies of civilians were taken to Shabqadar hospital," he said. He added that the suicide bomber who detonated the first bomb was in his late teens or early 20s.

Twelve vehicles and about 20 shops were also destroyed in the blasts, Marwat said.

Between one and two kilograms of explosives were used in one explosion, police officer Jahanzeb Khan said. He added that ball bearings and nails were used in the other, increasing the death toll.

"What I can see on the ground here is ... pools of drying blood, shredded clothing everywhere, blood covered prayer caps, and what we know is that the majority of the people who were killed in this twin suicide attack were killed in a second attack, which was meant to target those who came to help those who were killed in the first [blast]," reported Imtiaz Tyeb, Al Jazeera's correspondent in Charsadda.

"It really is quite a gruesome sight ... and close to a dozen people carriers [were] completely destroyed, this was an enormous explosion. Some of the shops just opposite the Frontier Constabulary ... the shutters that were in front of them were completely blown away."

### **'Blood and body pieces'**

The about 900 men who were attacked were going on a 10-day leave after having completed their six months of training at the fort.

A vegetable vendor at the site of the blasts told the Associated Press that some of the recruits were seated in white minivans, while others were loading luggage on top of the vehicles.

"There was a big blast," he said. "I saw smoke, blood and body pieces all around." Relief efforts have been slow, and the local hospital is poorly equipped to deal with the large number of casualties caused by the blasts.

"I was sitting in a van waiting for my colleagues. We were in plain clothes and we were happy we were going to see our families," Ahmad Ali, a wounded paramilitary policeman, told the AFP news agency by telephone from the Shabqadar hospital.

"I heard someone shouting 'Allah Akbar' and then I heard a huge blast. I was hit by something in my back shoulder. In the meantime I heard another blast and I jumped out of the van. I felt that I was injured and bleeding."

"The first blast occurred in the middle of the road, and after that there was a huge blast that was more powerful than the first," said Abdul Wahid, a 25-year-old recruit whose legs were wounded in the blasts.

He said he was knocked to the ground by the force of the explosions.

"After falling, I just started crawling and dragging myself to a safer place ... along the wall of a roadside shop," he said.

"Why are we being killed? Whose war is this? What is our sin?," asked an elderly man with a grey beard as the body of his teenage son was carried into the Peshawar hospital on a stretcher.

That sentiment was echoed by Bashir Bilour, a senior provincial minister who was visiting the bomb site.

"Why are these beasts targeting innocent people? These young boys were going back to see their parents. They were Muslims. They were Pashtuns," he said.

"Can I ask, why are they (Taliban) targeting their own countrymen? This is not Islam."

The attack is the bloodiest since Osama bin Laden was killed. Militants in Pakistan **said they would avenge bin Laden** by attacking Pakistani state targets.

More than 4,300 people have been killed in suicide and bomb attacks across Pakistan in the last four years.

### **Pakistani general cancels US trip**

Pakistani lawmakers are due to receive a briefing on the bin Laden killing from high-ranking members of the military establishment on Friday during a joint session of parliament that is to be held behind closed doors.

In a statement released on Friday, William Hague, Britain's foreign secretary, condemned the attack in Charsadda, calling such attacks "cowardly and indiscriminate". He offered his condolences to the families of those injured, and said that his country "is committed to standing with Pakistan in the fight against violent extremism".

In a separate development on Friday, General Khalid Shameem Wynne, the chairman of the Pakistani Joint Chiefs of Staff, cancelled a visit to the United States, a military official told AFP.

The official said that the trip had initially been scheduled for May 22-27, but had been cancelled "in view of the prevailing environment". Wynne called Admiral Michael Mullen, his American counterpart, to cancel the visit, the official said.