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Al Jazeera

Violence surrounds Wali Karzai's funeral

Blasts heard in Kandahar after thousands bury Ahmed Wali Karzai, influential brother of Afghan president.

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Hamid Karzai, the Afghan president, has led mourners at the funeral of Ahmed Wali Karzai, his influential younger half-brother, who was assassinated on Tuesday in Kandahar by a member of his own security team.

Thousands of people gathered on Wednesday morning amid tight security outside the provincial governor's compound where Ahmed Wali's body was kept, with many more piling on to buses headed for the funeral procession to the family village of Karz, about 20km away.

Security forces formed a tight perimeter around the compound and helicopters could be seen circling overhead. Attacks preceded and followed the funeral.

According to reports, Gulab Mangal, the Governor of Helmand province escaped an explosion near his car on the way to the funeral.

Al Jazeera correspondent Qais Azimy, reporting from Kabul, said: "The governor's spokesman confirmed that this morning when they were driving from Helmand to Kandahar, a roadside landmine, which was just 10 metres from the car, exploded. And two of the governor's bodyguards got injured."

Two explosions were heard in Kandahar city shortly after the funeral, reported Reuters news agency.

It was not immediately clear what caused these blasts, where they happened or whether there were any casualties.

Earlier reports suggested Karzai's elite security team had been deployed to secure the city for the funeral, that was postponed until Wednesday so family members could arrive.

"We know we live in a dangerous country. We know that security has to be tight all the time and the president knows [this]. He's got good security and that is not a worry for the president," Waheed Omer, Karzai's spokesman, told Al Jazeera.

"The president is upset, he is still in grief, about the death of his brother. Wali was a very close brother of the president," Omer said.

Karzai spoke of his brother's death at a news conference with visiting French President Nicolas Sarkozy on Tuesday.

"This is the life of the people of Afghanistan. Afghan families, every one of us, have suffered from it, and we hope, God willing, for our suffering to be over," he said.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for [killing](#) Ahmed Wali Karzai. They have, in the past, taken responsibility for attacks that security services have questioned their role in.

"When Taliban launched Operation Badar earlier in the year, they said, their aim would be to target top officials," said Al Jazeera's Azimy.

"But his ([Wali Karzai's](#)) cousin was shocked how it could happen to him by someone from his own tribe, someone who had served him for years."

Prince Ali Seraj of the national coalition of tribes, told Al Jazeera: "I believe and my people believe that this assassination was at the hands of a friend, who came from the same tribe and who had been serving for seven years so it is very difficult for Taliban to penetrate such a relationship, we believe it was totally personal.

"I don't think that they had a hand in it. And now in order to prove that they had a hand, they have carried out this explosion targeting the car of the governor of Helmand."

The younger Karzai was the government's key powerbroker in the south of the country, and his death deprives NATO of a vital, if controversial, ally in Kandahar, the heartland of the Taliban campaign against Afghan forces and the NATO-led international coalition.

"It will affect the security, of course... some believe, it will have an affect immediately in the coming weeks. It will affect Karzai's plan of talking to the Taliban," added our correspondent.

"We have received a Taliban statement giving message to all government officials to give up their jobs. And also saying that they (Taliban) can get them anywhere, when they want."

The half-brother of the Afghan leader was for years dogged by allegations of unsavoury links to the country's lucrative opium trade and ties to private security firms.

Wali Karzai's killing raises questions about possible infiltration among those closest to the Karzai family.

Over half of all assassinations in Afghanistan since March were carried out in Kandahar city, a recent UN report said.

President Karzai is believed to be prepared to talk to the Taliban but Seraj doubted that he would be willing to make peace with fighters from Chechnya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Pakistan.

"He is trying to make peace with Afghan Talibs, who are from the tribes here, asking them to lay their weapons in order to bring peace to Afghanistan," Seraj added