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Iraq Ripped by Wave of Bombings, Shootings

by VOA News
Several violent attacks ripped through Iraq, killing at least 103 people and wounding nearly 200 Monday in the deadliest day of attacks this year.

The shootings and bombings follow a warning last week by the head of the al-Qaida group in Iraq that he was stepping up operations in areas vacated by U.S. troops last year.
In June, the group claimed responsibility for a wave of car bombings that killed 72 people and wounded nearly 260 others.

Military targeted

Authorities said the attacks in 12 Iraqi locales targeted government and military installations. They included gunmen killing at least 15 Iraqi soldiers at a military base in the northeastern town of Udaim, as well as a series of explosions in the northern city of Kirkuk.

A car bomb also exploded in Baghdad. The deadliest attacks targeted Taji, just north of the capital, where bombs were planted in five houses and killed at least 40 people and wounded scores more.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the attacks appear well-coordinated. Coming during the holy time of Ramadan, they again call into question the ability of the fractured Iraqi government to corral terror.

Thirty-five-year-old Mohammed Munim, who was working at an interior ministry office that issues government ID cards told the Associated Press, "It was a thunderous explosion." That attack killed 16 people.

"The only thing I remember was the smoke and fire, which was everywhere," Munim said from from a Sadr City hospital where he was recovering from shrapnel wounds.
Jihadist websites posted a message Saturday, reportedly from the leader of al-Qaida's affiliate in Iraq, saying the group is starting a "new phase." The audio message from a speaker identified as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi said his group is planning to attack court officials, and to free prisoners.

Violence increasing

Violence in Iraq has increased in recent weeks, with attacks in June killing at least 237 people and leaving many Iraqis wondering if their government is able to guarantee security since the departure of U.S. troops.

In early July, bombings across Iraq killed at least 40 people and wounded nearly 100 others. In January, several bombings targeting Shi'ites killed 78 people.