

Latest attacks in Iraq kill 24 Shiites, 5 policemen, officials say
By Associated Press, Sinan Salaheddin contributed
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BAGHDAD — New attacks on Iraqi Shiites killed at least 24 people while assaults Friday against policemen killed five, officials said, as insurgents press their campaign to exacerbate the country's renewed sectarian tensions.

In one of the attacks on Shiites, a suicide bomber rammed his explosives-laden motorcycle into a funeral tent for a Shiite family in the town of in Muqadiyah, about 90 kilometers (60 miles) north of Baghdad, officials said.

The late Thursday evening explosion killed 13 people and wounded 24, the officials said.

In the northern town of Dujail, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) from Baghdad, a parked car bomb went off outside a Shiite mosque late on Thursday. As people gathered around the blast site, another bomb went off.

The twin bombing killed at least 11 people and wounded 25, said the town mayor, Nayif al-Khazrachi. Two medical officials confirmed the casualty figures.

The two attacks raised the overall death toll Thursday from a series of attacks, which included assaults on police stations in the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah west of Baghdad, to 40.

Sunni cleric Salah al-Nuaimi urged calm among Iraqis during a joint Sunni-Shiite Friday sermon in Baghdad aimed at easing sectarian tensions.

"Enough is enough," al-Nuaimi told worshippers at a Baghdad mosque. "We all love Iraq, we are all Iraqis and we want to be united, we want to stop the bloodletting, develop and build Iraq."

"Stop fighting, we have had enough of bombings. We want to agree on one word, we want to worship inside mosques comfortably," he added.

But attacks continued on Friday.

A suicide car bomber struck a police patrol outside the northern city of Mosul, killing four policemen, a police officer and a medical official said. Mosul is 360 kilometers (225 miles) northwest of the Iraqi capital.

And outside the northern city of Tikrit, 130 kilometers (80 miles) north of Baghdad, drive-by shooters armed with pistols fitted with silencers killed a senior police officer. The attack took place in the town Shirqat, a police officer said.

All officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to talk to the media.

The killings are the latest in a wave of bloodshed that has claimed the lives of more than 2,600 people since the start of April.

The months-long eruption of violence — Iraq's worst in half a decade — is raising fears the country is again returning to the brink of a civil war pitting its Sunni and Shiite Muslim sects against one another

On Wednesday, gunmen launched an assault on an army checkpoint and special oil industry police assigned to protect a nearby pipeline in the western Iraqi desert, killing at least 14 troops there.

There has been no claim of responsibility for the latest attacks but al-Qaida's Iraq branch, which has been gaining strength in recent months, frequently targets Shiites, security forces and civil servants in an effort to undermine the Shiite-led government in Baghdad.

According to the United Nations mission to Iraq, violence in June alone claimed the lives of 761 Iraqis and wounded 1,771 others.

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