

Fatal sectarian clashes in Lebanon's Tripoli

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War in Syria trickles on as Sunni and Alawite fighters exchange fire in coastal city, leaving two men killed.

Two men have been killed and three other wounded in sectarian clashes in the Lebanese port city of Tripoli between gunmen loyal to opposing sides in neighbouring Syria's civil war.

Lebanon's LBC channel confirmed the dead men as Mohammad Ibrahim, who was killed in the city's troubled Jabal Mohsen neighbourhood on Tuesday.

The other man, 26-year-old Abdel Rahman Nassouh, was fatally shot in Bab al-Tebbaneh, a Sunni neighbourhood, by sniper fire from Jabal Mohsen, the source added.

Tuesday's violence also wounded 12 people -- two in Jabal Mohsen and 10 in Bab al-Tebbaneh.

Residents said violence had flared overnight when rocket-propelled grenades were fired by gunmen in the Sunni neighbourhood of Bab al-Tabbaneh and the Alawite area of Jabal Mohsen.

Fighting then broke out on Tuesday morning after Sunni gunmen approached some Alawite shops.

All those shot were hit in Jabal Mohsen by sniper fire, a security source and residents said.

The report added that the Lebanese army sent out patrols in the area separating the rival Bab al-Tebbaneh and Jabal Mohsen neighbourhoods as well as deploying throughout the rest of Tripoli's main squares.

Flashpoint within Lebanon

Tensions had been building since the reported death of at least 14 Lebanese and Palestinian gunmen from north Lebanon in a Syrian town close to the border on Friday.

They appeared to have joined fighters prosecuting a 20-month-old revolt against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Syrian state television had showed graphic footage of the dead men, riddled with gunshot wounds and lying in the grass.

Lebanon's Foreign Minister Adnan Mansour asked the Syrian ambassador to hand over the bodies of the men after their families protested in Tripoli to demand the Lebanese government return the corpses and determine the whereabouts of the missing.

Tripoli's sectarian makeup has made it a flashpoint within Lebanon where violence from Syria has sometimes spilled over.

The Syrian uprising is mostly being waged by Sunni Muslims and largely opposed by minorities like Assad's own Alawite sect.

Tripoli is a majority Sunni city and mostly supports the uprising next door, but the coastal city has an Alawite minority and clashes have erupted several times since the revolt began.

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