

Bomber on Motorcycle Kills 9 During Rush Hour in Pakistan
By Declan Walsh
29 April 2013



An injured man in hospital on Monday, after a suicide bomber detonated his explosives on a busy Peshawar street during the morning rush hour.

PESHAWAR, Pakistan — A suicide bomber killed 9 people and wounded 29 on a busy road here early on Monday, officials said, in the latest episode of violence as Pakistan moves nervously toward elections scheduled for May 11.

An attacker riding a motorcycle detonated his explosives near the suspected target, a police patrol car, on busy University Road during the morning rush hour, killing a police constable and several bystanders, said Faisal Kamran, a senior police official.

“He was trying to get closer to the target but probably couldn’t get through the rush and exploded just a few feet away from the target,” Mr. Kamran said.

Two of the dead were Afghan trade officials, an Afghan diplomat said on the condition of anonymity. He identified one of them as Qari Bilal Ahmad Waqad, a son of Qazi Amin Waqad, who is a member of the Afghan High Peace Council. The diplomat identified the other Afghan as Mohammad Idrees, a refugee attaché at the nearby Afghan trade commissioner’s office in Peshawar.

Javed Marwat, the deputy city commissioner of Peshawar, said: “The Afghans were not the principal target. Might be that they were on their way to the office and fell victim to the bombing like several others killed.”

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, although the Taliban have carried out a relentless series of attacks against secular political parties around the country in recent weeks as part of a drive to influence the elections.

Officials in Peshawar said the attack on Monday was different in that it did not appear to target a specific party but aimed instead to foster a broader climate of fear during the campaign season.

“The target was neither an election camp office nor a candidate of the parties on the hit list,” a government official said on the condition of anonymity. “This may not be directly linked to the elections, but it certainly is part of the campaign to create fear among people ahead of the polls, which militants say are un-Islamic.”

Taliban attacks have largely focused on the Awami National Party, a secular-minded party that has governed Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, in the northwest, since 2008. The party says that 700 of its activists have been killed by the Taliban in the past five years.

But the Taliban have also attacked two other secular parties, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement and the Pakistan People's Party, in the port city of Karachi, where at least 25 people have died in attacks on election offices over the past week.

In a statement issued Monday, Human Rights Watch said that at least 70 people had died in 44 election-related attacks by the Taliban and other armed groups since early April.

The group called on the interim government to take "all necessary steps," including possible military deployments, to ensure the safety of candidates and political activists before the election.

©The New York Times 2013.