

7 killed in Baghdad explosion at Shiite mosque

Author:

Sat, 2019-06-22 00:50

BAGHDAD: A bomb blast killed seven people at a Shiite mosque in eastern Baghdad on Friday and wounded more than 20, police sources said.

The blast hit the Imam Mahdi Al-Muntadhar Mosque in Baladiyat, near the massive and densely populated district of Sadr City.

"At least one attacker wearing a belt of explosives tried to enter the building but was stopped by the guards, and detonated himself outside," one officer said.

"Two civilians were killed and nine people were wounded," the source said. The second officer confirmed the details and toll for the attack. At the scene, security forces quickly deployed to cordon off the site, a photographer at the mosque said.

It was a rare attack on a Shiite place of worship in the Iraqi capital.

Extremists carried out high-profile bombings of Iraqi Shiite sites during the worst of the country's sectarian violence after the US invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Baghdad's security improved significantly with the defeat of Daesh in 2017 and bomb attacks of any kind in the city have been rare since then.

Iraq has witnessed a rare period of relative calm in recent months after decades of back-to-back conflict, including years of sectarian violence that regularly saw dozens killed in explosions in Baghdad.



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Rockets hit Iraqi military base hosting US forces near Baghdad Baghdad's Green Zone reopens to the public after 16 years

[US forces prepare to evacuate contractors from Iraqi base – Reuters](#)

Sat, 2019-06-22 00:19

TIKRIT, Iraq: US forces are preparing to evacuate hundreds of staff working for Lockheed Martin Corp. and Sullyport Global from an Iraqi military base where they work as contractors, three Iraqi military sources said on Friday. Nearly 400 contractors from the two firms were getting ready to leave Balad military base north of Baghdad which hosts US forces over "potential security threats." Their departure was imminent, the sources said.



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Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman speaks with Donald Trump on Iran 'I am in no hurry': Trump aborts Iran strike, slaps more sanctions

[King Abdullah of Jordan slams 'hate-filled outlaws of Islam'](#)

Thu, 2019-06-20 21:21

AMMAN / SINGAPORE: Attacks on interfaith harmony, mutual respect and trust are the "world's single most important threat," King Abdullah of Jordan warned.

Speaking on Thursday at the International Conference on Cohesive Societies (ICCS) in Singapore, Jordan's monarch condemned both "outlaws of Islam and extremist Islamophobes."

"Perpetuators of hate-filled messages are distorting our religion's great heritage and teachings," he said.

King Abdullah called on the global community to tackle this challenge by "resisting hatred and exclusion," supporting economic growth and protecting

the environment.

In a keynote speech, the Jordanian ruler urged 700 delegates from 40 countries to apply the golden rule. "Loving one's neighbor is not just an ideal. It is the golden rule that enables all of us to live side by side, to look beyond ourselves, and to achieve what we can only achieve in common."

The conference was organized by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) with the support of Singapore's Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth.

Ong Keng Yong, executive deputy chairman of RSIS, described the Singapore conference as a platform for constructive dialogue to strengthen mutual trust and understanding across communities.

"Singapore is a multiracial, multi-religious society, and we work hard to keep our country peaceful and secure. At the same time, we are part of the global community, which faces challenges posed by increased connectivity, intensifying identity politics, and infinite technological development," he said.

King Abdullah listed Jordanian efforts including the Amman Message, the Common Word Initiative, and UN World Interfaith week.

However, when it comes to hate speech on the internet, solutions are not exclusively the responsibility of governments and big companies, he said.

"In a very real way, the internet belongs to its users. Moderate, positive voices need to reclaim this space and redirect the dialogue away from misinformation, insults and fear, and toward understanding and respect. Young men and women have a vital role in speaking up on social media and social networking sites, and using their talent for innovation to promote mutual understanding and hope."

The Jordanian monarch also called for a "holistic approach to address security and the issues that extremists exploit."

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King Abdullah

"We must also help to resolve conflicts, especially the core crisis of my region, the long denial of Palestinian statehood. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has fueled global discord and radicalism. We all need a lasting peace, meeting the needs of both sides, with a viable, independent, sovereign Palestinian state, on 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, but living side by side with Israel, in peace and security.

"We must safeguard Jerusalem, a holy city to billions of people around the world. As Hashemite Custodian of Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian holy

sites, I am bound by a special duty. But for all of us, Jerusalem must be a unifying city of peace.”

“King Abdullah is in a very difficult spot,” said Dr. James M. Dorsey, a Middle East expert and senior fellow at Singapore’s Nanyang Technological University.

Speaking to Arab News, Dr. Dorsey said the king’s speech reflects the geographical situation his country is facing.

“Every single border of his country is conflict-risk and impacts the country’s stability. If there is one country that desperately needs to get away from polarization and conflict and move toward conflict resolution, it is Jordan.”

Other speakers at the conference include Dr. Ali Al-Nuaimi, chairman of the World Muslim Communities Council; Bishop Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, president of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue; Dr. Nazirudin Mohd Nasir, deputy mufti and senior director at Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura; and John Alderdice, former Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Over the weekend, Singaporeans can experience key elements of the conference through a series of “Heartland Dialogues and Experiences” at locations across the city. These include “learning journeys” and opportunities to speak with conference speakers.

In parallel with the conference, the “Many Beliefs, One Future” exhibition explores human connections across different beliefs through a collection of artworks and artifacts.

The exhibition is open until June 13 at the Raffles City Shopping Center.

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Full speech of Jordan's King Abdullah II at the Arab Islamic-American Summit
Jordan's King Abdallah urges EU to fight "Islamophobia"

[Indian warships sent to strategic Gulf waters](#)

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Thu, 2019-06-20 18:41

NEW DELHI: India has sent warships and stepped up aerial surveillance in strategic Gulf waters, the Press Trust of India reported on Thursday. INS Chennai and INS Sunayna have been deployed in the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Gulf to "undertake maritime security operations," the navy said, quoted by PTI.

The navy said it aims to reassure Indian-flagged vessels operating in the waters, "following the maritime security incidents in the region."

Six tankers have been attacked with explosive devices in the last six weeks in the region in operations blamed on Iran.

Many Asian countries rely heavily on oil imports from the Gulf and the rise in tensions between Iran and the US and its allies has made many nervous that supplies will continue unaffected

US President Donald Trump on Thursday said Iran made a "big mistake" by shooting down a US spy drone over the Strait of Hormuz Thursday. The waterway links the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, and is a conduit for a fifth of the world's oil.

"Aerial surveillance by IN aircraft is also being undertaken in the area," India's navy said, according to PTI.

India's ambassador to Washington said in May that his energy-hungry nation had ended all imports of oil from Iran, in response to threatened US sanctions.



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Trump warns Iran it 'made big mistake' shooting down US drone over Strait of Hormuz
US intelligence proves 'without question' Iran behind tanker attacks

[Opposition candidate frontrunner in Istanbul election re-run](#)

Thu, 2019-06-20 20:57

ANKARA: The Turkish opposition candidate for the Istanbul mayoralty election re-run has emerged as the clear frontrunner to take office, according to latest opinion polls.

Surveys of thousands of voters in the Turkish city suggest Ekrem Imamoglu is on course for victory over his political rival Binali Yildirim.

One of Turkey's leading polling companies, Konda, gave Imamoglu an 8-9

percent lead in the race to become mayor based on the results of 3,498 interviews it carried out in 157 districts of Istanbul.

Another poll by Sonar, published on June 16, also put Imamoglu ahead with 52.3 percent of the vote against Yildirim's 46.7 percent.

The country's ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party) requested a re-run of the vote after losing the Istanbul mayoral elections to the opposition on March 31.

Nezih Onur Kuru, a political analyst and a doctoral researcher on political psychology from Istanbul's Koc University, said economic conditions along with a rise in unemployment, were key factors in the polls' results.

"Imamoglu can increase support from AKP and its nationalistic ally MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) voters, who have been affected by economic developments since the last election, and from opposition voters who did not turn out in the last elections. The difference is at least 2.5 percent according to the economic voting model," Kuru told Arab News.

Re-run campaign

During his campaign for the re-run, Imamoglu, who comes from a pious and conservative family, succeeded in rallying further votes behind his charisma, energy, pro-secular credentials and persistence in keeping his hard-won mayoral post.

His recent comments regarding swimming pools and alcohol-free restaurants were also aimed toward capturing undecided right-wing voters, added Kuru.

During a televised debate with Yildirim, Imamoglu promised to open more women-only pools in Istanbul and not to allow alcoholic beverages in municipality-run restaurants.

Dr. Emre Erdogan, co-founder of Istanbul-based Infakto Research Workshop, said: "There is a common feeling that Imamoglu will be the winner, and the discussions are about the difference." He said the decision to re-run the election had created a negative reaction which had helped Imamoglu to attract new voters.

"Such a possible victory will have important symbolic and materialistic consequences, first about the belief of invincibility of Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Turkish president) and it will create a common hope among the opposition bloc members for the forthcoming elections expected to be held in June 2023," the researcher added.

Supporters of Turkey's pro-Kurdish HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) are also expected to back Imamoglu at the vote June 23.

Imamoglu had been critical of what he described as waste and extravagance in the Istanbul metropolitan municipality. However, he faced a smear campaign in the pro-government media over his "Greek" roots.

Experts say a big election win for the opposition candidate would have serious political implications for the AKP, which has held the mayoralty of Istanbul for 25 years.

“A victory for Imamoglu will create an important wave within the AKP about responsibility for the defeat, and these discussions will be transformed to an intensified political conflict within the party. It will be crystallized in the formation of the new government,” Dr. Erdogan said.



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Erdogan's party fights to retake Istanbul in mayoral re-run vote
Deposed Istanbul mayor blasts 'lies' used to annul election