

Suicide attack killing dozens at prayer in Afghan mosque 'may amount to war crimes,' says top UN official

A suicide attack that took place inside a Shia mosque in Afghanistan during Friday prayers, killing dozens and injuring more than 70, has been condemned by the head of the UN Mission in the country who said it "may amount to war crimes."

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) denounced the attack in Gardez city, about 50 miles south of Kabul, when two suicide bombers detonated their explosive vests.

"This attack targeting civilians has [no possible justification](#)," said UNAMA chief, Tadamichi Yamamoto, who also serves as the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan. "Those who are responsible for enabling this attack must be brought to justice and held to account."

According to news reports, the Taliban has denied any links to the attack and there was no immediate claim of responsibility, but militants linked to the ISIL terrorist group, also known as Da'esh, have carried out similar attacks against Shiites in the past.

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"These brutal and senseless attacks against people at prayer are atrocities," said Mr. Yamamoto.

International humanitarian law prohibits deliberate attacks against civilians and civilian property, including places of worship. It also commits warring parties to allow religious leaders to serve their communities without fear of attack.

"Such attacks directed against congregations and places of worship are serious violations of international law that may amount to war crimes," he stressed.

UNAMA expressed its condolences to the loved ones of those killed and wished the injured a full and speedy recovery.

The latest terrorist assault comes on the heels of a suicide attack and hostage-taking at a government building on Wednesday, in the eastern city of Jalalabad.

According to mid-July [figures](#) from UNAMA, 1,692 civilians had been killed and

another 3,430 injured in the first six months of the year. This sets a record high for the first six months of any year, despite an unprecedented days-long ceasefire between the Government and Taliban extremists in mid-June.