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MoSSad at work: Twin suicide car bombs kill at least 64 and wounded 600 in Baghdad

By: afp on: 25.10.2009 [10:13] (189 reads)

(3095 bytes) [nc]

Twin suicide car bombs kill at least 64 in Baghdad

Posted: 25 October 2009 1756 hrs

BAGHDAD: Twin suicide car bombs blasted the justice ministry and city governorate in Baghdad on Sunday, killing at least 64 people, wounding 600 and sparking turmoil in the embattled Iraqi capital.

Authorities closed off streets leading to the bomb sites, which were littered with charred bodies and torn-off limbs, as fire trucks and ambulances struggled through thick traffic to reach the blazing buildings.

The attacks, which occurred within minutes of each other at around 10:30 am (0730 GMT), destroyed dozens of cars and shattered water pipes, spewing dirty water onto nearby streets, an AFP correspondent said.

At least 64 people were killed and more than 600 wounded in the twin attacks, according to a combined toll given by four hospitals in the capital to which the dead and injured were being ferried.

Several helicopters were flying overhead the area and dozens of humvees were lining the streets near the attack sites.

The powerful blasts, which brought a grim reminder of powerful truck bombings in the capital in August which killed almost 100 people, also damaged several nearby buildings and briefly knocked out electricity.

One of the attacks occurred at a busy intersection near the ministries of justice and labour, with an AFP journalist saying that the car that exploded was parked in the middle of the street.

The other attack occurred nearby, in Salhiyeh neighbourhood, outside the Baghdad governorate building.

"Why are they doing this to us?" shouted a man named Mohammed, who was close to the Salhiyeh attack.

"It's because of the election - they want to defy the government!" he said, referring to planned general elections in January.

The twin bombings came as Iraqi political leaders were to meet to try to end a deadlock over a stalled election law amid growing concerns that the country's January 16 election will have to be delayed.

Thick smoke billowed over the stricken area and fires could be seen from the two buildings, which are set in the city centre near the state television building.

Windows of nearby buildings were blasted in and firemen were using ladders to reach the upper floors of the ministries, fearing that many dead and wounded could be trapped.

Lieutenant General Ali Ghaidan Majeed warned in an interview with AFP on Saturday that the coming months could see an upswing in violence ahead of the January polls, with security only stabilising by the middle of next year after a transfer of power to a new government.

"I am concerned that between now ... and July 2010, basically throughout the election and after with the transfer from the old government to the new government, maybe you will see terrorist activities increase," he said.

Attacks have dropped dramatically compared to a year ago - violent deaths in September were the lowest since May - but remain high by international standards.

- AFP/yb

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_world/view/1013624/1/.html

