



Pakistani security personnel gather at the main entrance of a court complex after multiple suicide bomb attacks

Suicide bombers hit court in Pakistan, 7 killed

Tangi

At least seven people were killed when multiple Taliban suicide bombers attacked a court complex in northern Pakistan yesterday, the latest in a series of assaults which have raised fears militants are regrouping.

One bomber was briefly on the loose inside the busy complex in the Tangi area of Charsadda district but was killed by police some 20 minutes after the attack

began, officials said.

A second bomber was shot dead by security forces and a third died when he detonated his vest outside the main gates of the facility in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to police.

The attack was claimed by the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) faction of the Pakistani Taliban, which carried out a series of apparently coordinated assaults last week including a powerful bomb

blast in Lahore which killed 14 people.

"So far seven people have been killed and 15 wounded," Suhail Khalid, district police chief, told AFP, adding that a lawyer was among the dead.

The three attackers had opened fire on police and thrown grenades as they tried to battle their way into the complex, Khalid said.

"Bomb disposal experts told us that each bomber was wearing seven to eight

kilogrammes of explosives," he told reporters.

Hundreds of people including lawyers, judges and citizens normally attend the court complex.

Police scoured the area for evidence as military helicopters whirred overhead. An old man whose four-year-old grandson died in the attack wept.

Another man who witnessed the attack, Muhammad Hussain, said

he was about to enter the complex when he heard the blast.

"When I looked up I saw three armed men, hurling grenades and opening fire," said the 35-year-old civil servant, adding he sought shelter in a nearby police barracks from where he heard the gunbattle.

"This continued for some minutes and then I heard another big bang. Some minutes after a policemen

told me that it's all over."

Lawyers and the judiciary are frequent targets in Pakistan. Among last week's assaults was a bomb blast targeting a van carrying judges in Peshawar.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's office condemned the latest assault.

"We will not be deterred by such attacks. Our government will continue to fight against terrorist elements," a statement said. - (AFP)

Le Pen in headscarf controversy

Beirut

France's far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen capped her visit to Lebanon with controversy yesterday when she refused to wear a headscarf to meet the country's top cleric.

On her last day in the Mediterranean country, Le Pen arrived at Sheikh Abdellatif Deryan's office in Beirut and was offered a white shawl to cover her blonde hair.

She promptly refused and made a brief statement to journalists before leaving.

"The highest Sunni authority in the world had not had this requirement, so I have



Marine Le Pen (C) reacts upon being handed a headscarf ahead of a meeting

no reason to," Le Pen said, referring to her 2015 visit to Al-Azhar, the prestigious institution of Islamic learning.

She said she had told Deryan's office that she would not don a headscarf: "They did not cancel the meeting, so I

thought they would accept that I will not wear the scarf."

"They wanted to impose this on me, to present me with a fait accompli," the candidate said.

Deryan heads Dar al-Fatwa, the highest Sunni authority in Lebanon.

In a statement yesterday, the body said "its press office had informed the presidential candidate, through one of her assistants, of the need to cover her head when she meets his eminence, according to the protocol assumed by Dar al-Fatwa".

"Dar al-Fatwa officials were surprised by her refusal to conform to this rule," it said.

Palestinian journalist released after 10 months



Palestinian journalists hold placards during a demonstration in support of their colleague, Omar Nazzal

Jerusalem

A senior Palestinian journalist has been released after 10 months in an Israeli jail without charge, he told yesterday.

Omar Nazzal, 55, was released on Monday after nearly a year in prison and following 13 hearings in an Israeli military court, he said.

Despite that, he added, he never received specific allegations, only a "general accusation" that he was threatening "regional security".

"When my lawyer asked for details, he got only rejections from judges and military prosecutors," Nazzal, a member of the general secretariat of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate.

He was arrested on April 23 at the border between the

Israeli-occupied West Bank and Jordan, from where he had been due to fly to a European Federation of Journalists gathering in Bosnia.

Nazzal, a former employee at the Palestine Today newspaper, was detained under Israel's controversial administrative detention laws, which allow suspects to be interned for indefinite periods without charge on evidence often not given to their lawyers.

The Palestinians have labelled his arrest an attack on press freedom and several international organisations have called for his release.

According to the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, around 20 journalists or journalism students are held by Israel, one of them for more than 20 years.

Mugabe marks 93rd birthday

Harare

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, the world's oldest national ruler, turned 93 yesterday, using a long and occasionally rambling interview to vow to remain in power despite growing signs of frailty.

He celebrated the day at a private event in Harare with a cake and presents from staff as supporters and ruling ZANU-PF party officials filled state

media with gushing messages of goodwill.

During an hour-long, pre-recorded television interview Mugabe appeared to grow increasingly tired.

"The call to step down must come from my party. In such circumstances I will step down," he said.

"They want me to stand for elections. If I feel that I can't do it any more, I will say so to my party to relieve me.

"The majority of the people feel that there is no replacement a successor who to them is acceptable."

The Zimbabwean opposition used the birthday to say Mugabe was an outdated leader.

Large game animals are often slaughtered for the occasion. In previous years Mugabe has reportedly been offered elephants, buffalo and impala for the feast.



Robert Mugabe blows out candles during his birthday