

Pakistan on edge as 8 killed in Lahore bomb blast

Lahore
At least eight people were killed and 28 injured after a bomb ripped through Pakistan's Lahore yesterday, officials said, the tenth attack in just under a fortnight pointing to a resurgence in Islamist violence.

The blast, the second to hit the provincial capital this month, crumpled cars and sent panic rippling through the city after the wave of attacks across Pakistan killed more than 130 people.

"My God, my God, I saw so many bodies," in the posh Defence Housing Authority suburb of the city, replete with upscale boutiques and cafes.

"The building where the bomb went off was under construction in a market crowded with people, including children," said Imtiaz Ali, a barber in a Tony & Guy hair salon opposite the blast site.

"When I came out I first just saw smoke and dust... Bikes upturned. Cars destroyed. My own colleague's car windows blown out. My clients' cars blown out. I was close to

fainting."

Police and administration officials confirmed it was a bomb attack, as the provincial health minister Khawaja Salman Rafique and rescuers supplied the casualty toll.

"Four people died on the spot while another four died of their wounds in the hospital," Rafique said.

No group has yet claimed responsibility.

Just over an hour later rumours of a second blast in another affluent area nearby sent ambulances racing to the scene, though authorities later said the reports were false.

Panic also spread on social media as citizens exchanged messages purporting to be warnings from intelligence agencies, including one that falsely stated a general curfew had been ordered over Lahore with shoot-on-sight orders.

The rumours underscored growing nervousness across the country as a series of assaults shook Pakistanis



Pakistani officials move a damaged car from the site

emboldened by what had been a prolonged lull in violence.

The attacks included a previous bomb in Lahore on February 13 which killed 14 people, and a devastating suicide blast at a Sufi shrine in Sindh province that left 90 devotees dead.

The incidents, most of which were claimed by the Islamic State group or the

Pakistani Taliban, have dented optimism after the country appeared to be making strong gains in its decade-and-a-half long war on militancy.

'Baiting' militants

Islamabad launched a crackdown in the wake of the attacks, saying it has killed dozens of "terrorists" in recent days and carried out airstrikes on militant hideouts along the Afghan border.

Pakistan has accused Afghanistan of harbouring the militants who have carried out the most recent attacks. (AFP)

Eleven bloody days in Pakistan

February 21

Seven people are killed when multiple suicide bombers attack a court complex in northern Pakistan.

February 16

At least 90 devotees are killed and hundreds wounded when a devastating bomb detonates in the popular Sufi shrine of Lal Shabaz Qalandar in Sehwan in southern Pakistan.

- Gunmen on motorcycles kill four policemen and a civilian in the northwestern town of Dera Ismail Khan.
- An improvised explosive device claimed by JuA hits an army convoy in Balochistan, killing three soldiers.

February 15

- A suicide bomber rides a motorcycle into a van carrying judges in Peshawar, killing the van's driver.

- Two suicide bombers launch an assault on a government compound in the Mohmand tribal region in the northwest, killing five people and wounding seven.

February 13

- Fourteen are killed and 82 injured when a powerful bomb blast tears through Lahore.

- Two members of the bomb disposal squad are killed while defusing a device in Balochistan.

February 12

- A roadside bomb kills three paramilitary soldiers in a restive northwestern tribal area bordering Afghanistan.



Pakistani security officials cordon off the site of a bomb attack