



# Deadly **blast** hits Islamabad

Suicide blast at Islamabad mosque kills at least 31, wounds over 130

- Blast occurred during Friday prayers
- Suicide bomber detonates at mosque gate
- Deadliest Islamabad attack since 2008 Marriott blast

AFP | Islamabad

A suicide bombing at a mosque in Pakistan's capital Islamabad killed at least 31 people yesterday, according to authorities, with a police source saying more than 130 were wounded.

City officials said 31 people died in the blast at the Imam Bargah Qasr-e-Khadijatul Kubra mosque in the Tarlai area on the city's outskirts.

"The attacker was stopped at the gate and detonated himself," a security source told AFP.

A senior police official said the explosion occurred after Friday prayers, when mosques around the country are packed with worshippers.

The casualty toll was "expected to rise further", he told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

No group immediately claimed responsibility, while Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said those behind the blast would be found and brought to justice.

South Asia analyst Michael Kugelman said on X that the target suggests it was either the local affiliate of the Islamic State



Security personnel stand guard outside a mosque following an explosion

group or other militants.

The attack was the deadliest in the Pakistani capital since September 2008, when 60 people were killed in a suicide truck bomb blast that destroyed part of the five-star Marriott hotel.

**Bodies, bloodied clothing, debris**

AFP journalists at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences hospital saw several people including children being carried in on stretchers or by their arms and legs.

Medics and bystanders helped unload victims with blood-soaked clothes from the back of ambulances and vehicles. At

least one casualty arrived in the boot of a car.

Friends and relatives of the wounded wept and screamed as victims -- dead or alive -- arrived at the hospital's heavily guarded emergency ward.

Another team of AFP journalists saw armed security forces outside the mosque, where pools of blood were visible on the ground.

Yellow crime scene tape surrounded an investigation area, with shoes, clothing and broken glass scattered around the site.

Videos shared on social media, which AFP was not able to verify immediately, showed several bodies lying near the mosque's

front gate, with people and debris also strewn across the red-carpeted prayer hall.

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar branded the attack "a heinous crime against humanity and a blatant violation of Islamic principles".

"Pakistan stands united against terrorism in all its forms," he said in a post on X.

**Growing insurgencies**

The attack comes as Pakistan's security forces battle intensifying insurgencies in southern and northern provinces that border Afghanistan.

Islamabad has said separatist armed groups in southern Ba-

The bombing is Islamabad's deadliest attack since 2008, when a truck blast destroyed part of the Marriott Hotel and killed around 60 people

lochistan, and the Pakistani Taliban and other Islamist militants in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, near Islamabad, have used Afghan territory as a safe haven from which to launch attacks.

Afghanistan's Taliban government has repeatedly denied Pakistan's accusations.

Bilateral relations have plummeted, with forces from both sides regularly clashing along the border.

The last major attack in Islamabad took place in November when a suicide blast outside a court killed 12 people and wounded dozens, the first such incident to hit the capital in nearly three years.

In Balochistan, attacks claimed by separatist insurgents last week killed 36 civilians and 22 security personnel, prompting a wave of counter-operations in which authorities said security forces killed almost 200 militants.

## Trump tried to name airport, rail station after himself: US media

AFP | Washington

US President Donald Trump offered to unfreeze federal infrastructure funding if the top Senate Democrat would help rename a major airport and train station after him, US media reported Thursday.

Trump, a real estate mogul who plastered his name on buildings around the world, has sought to leave his mark on the country in an unprecedented image and building campaign.

In December, Trump's hand-picked board of the Kennedy Center, an arts complex and memorial to late president John F. Kennedy, voted to rename itself the "Trump-Kennedy Center."

Meanwhile he has pushed for the construction of an "Independence Arch" similar to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and launched the construction of a new White House ballroom, tearing down the storied building's East Wing to make way.

But New York's Penn Station and Washington's Dulles International Airport are also in Trump's sights, CNN and NBC



Travelers sit on the floor inside Penn Station waiting for their trains

Citing unnamed sources, the outlets reported Trump offered a quid-pro-quo for the held-up funding, meant for a New York infrastructure project, if New York Senator Chuck Schumer agreed to help get the train station and airport named after him.

Schumer rebuffed the offer, the broadcasters reported. CNN reported the offer was made last month.

New York and New Jersey are currently suing for the \$16 billion in blocked federal funds, meant to be used for a tunnel connecting them.

## Trump posts election conspiracy video with Obamas depicted as monkeys

AFP | Washington

US President Donald Trump on Thursday posted an election conspiracy video that depicted former president Barack Obama and his wife Michelle as monkeys, drawing condemnation from prominent Democrats.

Near the end of a one-minute-long video posted on Trump's Truth Social platform, the Obamas are shown with their faces on the bodies of monkeys for about one second.

The song "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" plays in the background when the Obamas appear.

The video repeats false allegations that ballot-counting company Dominion Voting Systems helped steal the 2020 election from Trump.

As of early yesterday morning, the video had been liked several thousand times on the president's social media platform.

The office of California Governor Gavin Newsom, a potential 2028 Democratic presidential candidate and a prominent Trump critic, slammed the post.



Donald Trump speaks with Barack Obama as Melania Trump looks on (file photo)

"Disgusting behavior by the President. Every single Republican must denounce this. Now," Newsom's press office account posted on X.

Ben Rhodes, a former top national security advisor and close confidant to Barack Obama, also condemned the imagery.

"Let it haunt Trump and his racist followers that future Americans will embrace the Obamas as beloved figures while studying him as a stain on our history," he wrote on X.

Obama is the only Black president in American history and backed Trump's opponent Kamala Harris on the campaign trail in the 2024 presidential election.

In the first year of his second term in the White House, Trump ramped up his use of hyper-realistic but fabricated visuals on Truth Social and other platforms, often glorifying himself while lampooning his critics.

He has used the provocative posts to rally his conservative base.



TOP  
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TWEETS

01



The world is making progress to #EndFGM - yet falling behind on reaching the 2030 Global Goal. This International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, let's recommit to scale-up efforts proven to work. Because every girl and woman deserves a life free from FGM.

@unicefchief

02



Vice President Vance and Italian Prime Minister @GiorgiaMeloni met this morning prior to the Olympic Opening Ceremony this evening in Milan

@VP

03



Russia will only come to the table with genuine intent if it is pressured to do so. So we are tabling our 20th package of sanctions against Russia covering energy, financial services and trade

@vonderleyen

04



Progress on Syria humanitarian access and efficiency last year meant we reached 3.5 million people with vital support every month, despite deep funding cuts. We need to sustain this life-saving aid while we help communities move from relief to recovery. #87MillionLives

@UNReliefChief

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