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Blast rocks Karachi Shia mosque
A bomb blast has killed at least 10 people and injured about 50 at a Shia mosque in the southern Pakistani city of Karachi, correspondents say.



Sunni Muslims rioted on Sunday after the cleric's killing

The blast happened during evening prayers, causing extensive damage to the building.

On Sunday a top Sunni Muslim cleric, Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, was shot dead as he drove to his religious school.

Thousands of Pakistani troops had been deployed on the city's streets after the killing sparked rioting on Sunday.

Sunni-Shia sectarian violence has killed thousands in the past 15 years.

'Gravely concerned'

"We heard that there was an explosion near the Ali Raza Imam Bargah," Karachi police chief Tariq Jamil told the Reuters news agency, referring to a Shia mosque.

Pakistan's information minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, said the blast, during evening prayers, was caused by a bomb.

He said President Pervez Musharraf was gravely concerned over recurring attacks in Karachi.

Initial reports said the explosion was so powerful it cracked the mosque's concrete dome.

An office building belonging to the trust that manages the mosque collapsed.

Angry crowds quickly gathered at the mosque and our correspondent says a police vehicle was set on fire.

The blast took place only a kilometre from the site of Mufti Shamzai's killing.

Police had been trying specifically to protect Shia mosques following Mufti Shamzai's death.

Interior ministry spokesman Abdur Rauf Chaudhry said it was too early to say who carried out the attack but said it appeared to be sectarian violence.

Police taskforce

A coalition of six fundamentalist parties, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), had called for a nationwide strike on Friday in protest at Mufti Shamzai's killing.

A senior MMA leader, Maulana Fazlur Rahman, said: "We will not sit silent. We will protest against the brutal murder of a great religious personality.

"We will be forced to take other steps if the killers of Nizamuddin Shamzai are not arrested," he said.

A police taskforce has been formed to investigate the killing.

No one has yet said they carried out the attack.

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Up to six gunmen ambushed the car of Mufti Shamzai, witnesses said.

One of the 75-year-old cleric's sons, a nephew, a driver and a police bodyguard were wounded.

Mufti Shamzai was a strong critic of the US, urging a holy war after the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Sunni Muslims, including his students, rioted at news of his death, attacking a police station and burning cars.

Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali called the killing a "dastardly act of terrorism".

The cleric's death came three weeks after at least 14 people were killed in Karachi when a man, apparently dressed as a Shia cleric, blew himself up in a Shia mosque.

As many as 4,000 people have been killed in Pakistan since the late 1980s in Shia-Sunni sectarian violence.



The car of Mufti Shamzai was ambushed by up to six gunmen

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