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The injured were treated at local hospitals

Gunmen have attacked a prayer meeting in Pakistan, killing 11 people and wounding more than 20 others.

The victims included five children and a police officer.

Police have confirmed the deaths of 11 people but Shia Muslim leaders say 15 were killed in the attack.

Security has been tightened across Pakistan after the attack, which coincided with the holy month of Moharram.

A group of Shia Muslims were holding a prayer meeting in Mulawali, some 150km north-west of the capital, Islamabad, when the gunmen burst in, firing automatic weapons and throwing grenades.

"We were listening to the prayers and then all of a sudden there was a loud blast and everyone started running," 16-year-old Azhar Shah told the Associated Press.

"I felt something hot on my ribs and I looked down and I was bleeding," he said.

There is no clear indication who was behind the attack but one of those attending the meeting blamed rival Sunni Muslims.

'Insecure'

Sayed Mazhar Gailani, a leader of a Shia political party,

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“
All of a sudden there was a loud blast and everyone started running
”

Azhar Shah



▀ The BBC's
Zaffar Abbas

"A wave of panic
and anger"

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Tehrik-e-Jaffria, called on the army to quickly arrests the assailants.

"People will feel insecure attending religious gathering until the killers are arrested," Mr Gailani said.

The attack, the worst of its kind for about a year took place as devout Shias mourned the death of the grandson of the prophet Mohammed in the holy month of Moharram.

The BBC's Zaffar Abbas says tensions between the two communities is often high during this period.

Police have been placed on alert four days before the main day of mourning - on the 10th day of Moharram.



Security has been stepped up after the attack

Last week, a prominent Shia leader, Waqar Hussain Naqvi, was shot dead in the southern city of Karachi.

Mr Naqvi was the secretary general of the Tehrik-e-Jaffria.

Pakistan's military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, has called for an end to sectarian violence in Pakistan between the Sunni majority and Shia minority.

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