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Sectarian violence has claimed hundreds of lives

Five people have been shot dead in Karachi in what police believe is the latest round in a bitter feud between extremist Muslim factions.

The victims, who were from a Sunni Muslim school, died when unidentified gunmen opened fire on their van on a bridge in an eastern district of the city.

The gunmen escaped and in the aftermath five more people were wounded in an exchange of gunfire.

Hundreds of people have been killed in Sunni-Shi'ite violence in Pakistan in recent years. The two groups disagree over interpretations of Islamic beliefs.

Exchange of fire

The van was carrying students and teachers to an Islamic seminary, the Jamia Farooqia, in Shah Faisal Colony. At least three of the dead are believed to be clerics.

Hours after the bridge attack, Sunni activists forced the closure of shops in Shah Faisal Colony and lit bonfires. There were reports of gunfire from the area.

Last week a prominent Shi'ite Muslim cleric was shot dead outside a Karachi mosque following the death of an Iranian Shi'ite cleric in central Punjab 10 days ago.

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