

Afghanistan suicide blast in Kabul kills 48, injures 67 – Health Ministry

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A suicide blast in the Afghanistan capital of Kabul has killed 48 people, the Health Ministry has said. A further 67 were wounded in the explosion that occurred on Wednesday in a mainly Shi'ite area of the city.

A suspected suicide bomber blew himself up outside an educational center in the western part of the capital.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, although Islamic State (formerly ISIS) has previously said it was responsible for attacks on Shi'ite targets.

The incident comes as the government faces pressure over a Taliban attack in the city of Ghazni, which led to five days of fighting in the capital, claiming the lives of hundreds of civilians and members of the security forces.

According to the United Nations, up to 150 civilians have been killed in violence in the strategic provincial capital.



An Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier keeps watch at a checkpoint on the Ghazni - Kabul highway. © Reuters/ Mohammad Ismail

While Afghanistan's Defense Ministry claimed that government forces would soon regain control of the city as "*Taliban militants had been pushed back,*" civilians at the scene say that fighting is ongoing.

*"The Taliban are still roaming the streets and using civilians as human shields. They are scattered inside residential areas which cannot be targeted by airstrikes,"* Aziz Ullah Hussaini, a shopkeeper, told the Times.

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Tens of thousands of people have been trapped in the city since the militant group broke its defenses in the early hours of Friday morning.

Meanwhile, a further 17 soldiers were killed in Kabul on Wednesday after Taliban fighters overran a military base in the north of the capital. The assault came as a huge blow to government forces, which were already stretched as they battled the militant group in Ghazni.

The government has been struggling against a Taliban resurgence since NATO troops withdrew in 2014.

NATO troops have since been in Afghanistan leading a non-combat mission to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces.