

Blast kills dozens near school in Afghan capital Kabul

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**An injured woman is transported to hospital after the blast in a Shia district of west Kabul
[Mohammad Ismail/Reuters]**

Kabul, May 9 (RHC)-- An explosion near a school in a Shia district of west Kabul has killed at least 30 people, many of them young female students, an Afghan government spokesman said. Ambulances rushed to evacuate the wounded from the scene of the blast on Saturday near Syed Al-Shahda school, in the Shia majority neighbourhood of Dasht-e-Barchi, Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said. He did not specify the cause or the target of the explosion.

Ghulam Dastagir Nazari, spokesman for the health ministry, said 46 people had been taken to hospitals so far. Kabul is on high alert since Washington announced plans last month to pull out all US troops by September 11, with Afghan officials saying the Taliban has stepped up its attacks across the country. No group has claimed responsibility for Saturday's blast.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani issued a statement condemning the attack, blaming the Taliban even as the group denied it. He offered no proof. "The Taliban, by escalating their illegitimate war and violence, have once again shown that they are not only reluctant to resolve the current crisis peacefully and fundamentally, but by complicating the situation," Ghani said.

The Taliban condemned the attack, apparently aimed at civilians, and denied any responsibility. It took place in a neighborhood that has frequently been attacked by ISIL (ISIS) fighters over the years.

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