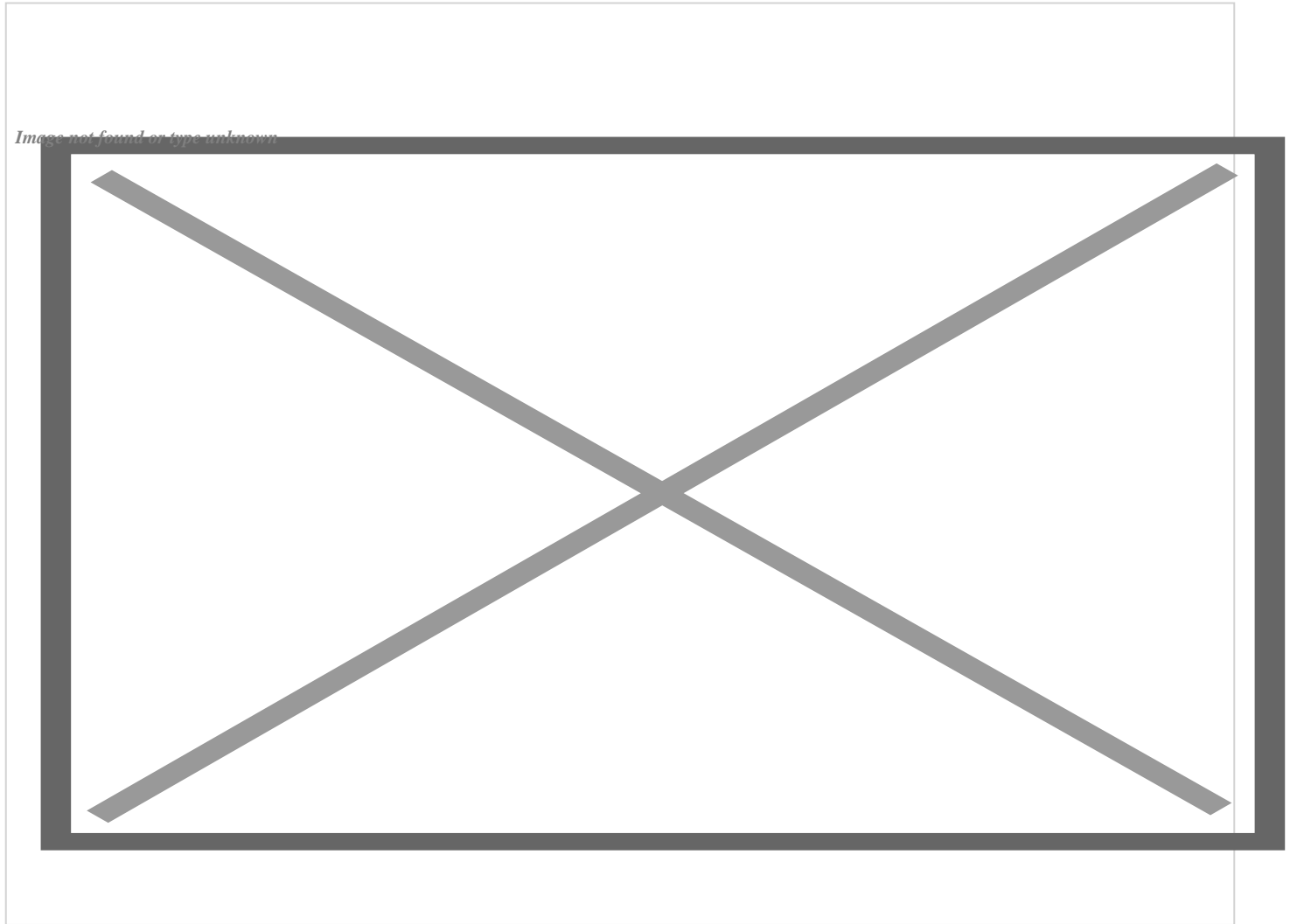


Death toll rises in Damascus mosque bombing

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Damascus, July 28 (RHC)-- At least six people have been killed and another 23 wounded in a motorcycle bombing near the Sayeda Zeinab mosque, in a southern suburb of the Syrian capital, the Interior Ministry has said.

A motorbike carrying explosives detonated on a crowded street in the Damascus countryside on Thursday evening, according to Syrian officials, who later shared photos of the aftermath on social media.

One resident cited by Reuters said he heard a blast at around 5:30 pm local time, after which security forces quickly sealed off the area. The Interior Ministry said multiple agencies responded to the “terrorist explosion,” including officers with Syria’s Criminal Security Directorate.

Another local resident told AFP that the explosion took place “near a security building” meters from the Sayeda Zeinab mosque, adding that they “heard a huge blast and people began to run.” An important

pilgrimage site for Shia Muslims, the mosque is located in suburbs south of Damascus, and was the target of another bombing earlier this week which left two people injured.

The attacks came just days before Ashura, an Islamic holiday largely celebrated by Shia Muslims to mark the death of a grandson of the prophet Muhammad. Thousands of pilgrims travel to the Sayeda Zeinab mosque for the occasion, triggering heightened security in the area in recent years.

No militant group has taken responsibility for this week's bombings, which follow a string of previous attacks on the holy site. Though terrorism has declined in recent years in the wake of Syria's protracted civil war, Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS) has claimed credit for multiple bombings on the mosque, including one which left 40 people dead in 2017.

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