

More than 80 dead in Pakistan suicide bombing, raids

A suicide bomber wearing a burqa, who some officials said was a woman, killed at least 43 people at a World Food Programme distribution point in a tribal area bordering Afghanistan

- AFP
- Published: 09:49 December 25, 2010
- [Reader comments \(0\)](#)

Khar, Pakistan: More than 80 were killed in a suicide bombing on a World Food Programme project and a series of helicopter raids against militant camps in northwestern Pakistan on Saturday, officials said.

A suicide bomber wearing a burqa, who some officials said was a woman, killed at least 43 people at a World Food Programme distribution point in a tribal area bordering Afghanistan.

The blast occurred in Khar, the main town of lawless Bajaur tribal district, once a stronghold of Taliban militants who have carried out several bombings and suicide attacks in the area.

Most of the victims belonged to the local Salarzai tribe which supported military action against the militants and formed a militia to force them from Bajaur.

[See Gulf News report: Spoils of war on terrorism in Pakistan](#)

"At least 43 people were killed and more than 100 wounded in the suicide bombing," top tribal administration official Zakir Hussain said.

Separately, 40 militants were killed in Mohmand, another lawless tribal district, in a series of military raids, officials said.

There were conflicting reports about the identity of the bomber in Khar with some officials saying the attacker was a woman, while others claimed a man disguised in a burqa was responsible.

The bomber was intercepted at a checkpoint outside the ration distribution centre and the blast occurred during a search, Sohail Khan said.

The deputy administrator of Khar, Tariq Khan, told AFP that the bombing was carried out by a woman. "It was a female suicide bomber," he said.

Tribal police officials Mubashir Khan and Munasib Khan also said the attacker was a woman, who resisted being searched and hurled a hand grenade at security guards at the checkpoint before triggering her bomb.

"I was waiting to be searched in a queue at the checkpoint outside the ration point and heard a grenade explosion. People started running in panic and then a huge blast occurred," tribesman Mushtaq Khan told AFP in hospital.

Khan, who suffered injuries to his arm, said he saw many people lying on the ground in pools of blood amid a cloud of dust and smoke.

Salarzai tribespeople had set up a vigilante force to evict militants from their area, but officials declined to comment when asked if they were the bomber's intended target.

A spokesman for Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the bombing.

"We carried out the suicide attack in Khar because these people had made a lashkar (tribal vigilante force) against us," Azam Tariq told AFP in a telephone call.

Bajaur is one of seven Pakistani tribal districts, which the United States considers the global headquarters of Al Qaida and among the most dangerous places on Earth.

Security officials said they had been warned that two suicide bombers had entered Bajaur and would carry out attacks on December 22, but had changed their plans.

The local administration imposed an indefinite curfew in Khar while security forces patrolled streets and launched a search, officials said.

© Gulf News 2010