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Al Jazeera

## Deadly suicide blast hits Kabul

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At least 18 people have been killed, including eight Afghan civilians and six Nato troops, in a suicide car-bomb attack in the Afghan capital, Kabul, police say.

Tuesday's attack targeted a Nato convoy close to an army-recruitment centre, the parliament and other government buildings in Kabul.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the blast, one of the deadliest attacks in Kabul in months.

The Nato alliance did not give details on the nationalities of the dead.

The suicide bomber is reported to have been driving a car laden with explosives.

### **Suicide attack**

A Nato convoy was the apparent target of the attack.

Zemarai Bashary, the interior ministry spokesman, confirmed it was a suicide attack and that the target was the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (Isaf).

"There are a number of casualties, civilians killed and wounded," he said.

He did not have further details.

Lieutenant Commander Iain Baxter, an Isaf spokesman, said: "An Isaf convoy was hit. At the moment we're trying to confirm the number of Isaf casualties."

Asked if he could confirm any Isaf casualties, the spokesman said: "We're still confirming how many Isaf casualties have been caused."

Zemarai Bashary, the interior ministry spokesman, said at least 12 civilians were killed and 47 others wounded, most of whom had been travelling in a bus that passed when the suicide bomber blew up a car packed with explosives.

Children and women were among the dead and wounded, Bashary said.

General Ahmad Zia Yaftali, an Afghan army chief military doctor, said at least 20 people died.

"We have five bodies brought to our hospital so far ... the number of the dead is more than 20," Yaftali told the AFP news agency.

Sayed Kabir Hameedi, a senior official from the ministry of public health, said: "the death toll could rise further, it is an initial report we have."

Police cordoned off the road near Darulaman palace, a derelict building that once housed Afghanistan's royal family.

Afghan television broadcast footage of the bomb site, where US soldiers and Afghan police were seen inspecting a minivan.

Yaftali's death toll of 20 would make it the deadliest attack in the capital since February.

## **Resurgent Taliban**

Al Jazeera's Hoda Abdel-Hamid, reporting from Kabul, said: "Kabul has been largely spared this continuous low-level violence that plagues the rest of the country. The last time there was a large explosion here in the capital was about two months ago."

Tuesday's bombing was the first major attack in Kabul since February 26 when Taliban suicide bombers targeted guesthouses, killing 16 people including Westerners and Indians in one of the deadliest attacks on foreigners.

An increasingly resurgent Taliban has announced a spring offensive in May against government officials and foreign diplomats and troops.

So far this year, 202 Nato soldiers have died, marking the deadliest January to mid-May period in the Afghan war.

From January to end-May 2009, 119 Nato soldiers died in Afghanistan. Overall, 520 Nato troops

died in 2009, the deadliest year so far for US-led foreign troops since the 2001 US-led invasion brought down the Taliban regime.

Since summer 2009, one or two Nato soldiers have died on average each day.

Barack Obama, the US president, ordered 30,000 more US troops to Afghanistan last year in a plan he said that would enable American soldiers to begin pulling out as early as July 2011.