

ISIS claims deadliest bombing in Lebanon since end of civil war

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Lebanon observed a day of mourning Friday for 43 people killed in a pair of suicide bombings that rocked the southern Beirut working-class suburb of Bourj el-Barajneh on Thursday evening.

The savage bombings, which targeted a busy commercial and residential street at the peak of evening rush hour, also left at least another 239 people wounded, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry, and the death toll is expected to rise.

The first bomb was detonated outside the entrance to a school. The street surrounding it was filled with families gathering after the end of the workday.

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claimed responsibility for the attack, which included a third suicide bomber who was killed in the blasts before he could detonate his explosives.

It was the bloodiest attack that has been seen in Lebanon since the end of its 15-year civil war in 1990.

Many of the stunned residents of the neighborhood Thursday night expressed anger and hatred for both Saudi Arabia and the United States, which they blamed for instigating the sectarian civil war in neighboring Syria and backing the Sunni Islamist groups that are responsible for this latest bombing as well as a string of attacks that took place in 2013 and 2014.

Thursday's attack was widely seen as a lashing out by ISIS in response to a series of setbacks it has faced in Syria, where the Shia-based political movement and militia, Hezbollah, has sent fighters to battle the Al Qaeda-linked militias alongside Syrian government forces.

The media in both the West and in Saudi Arabia and the other Sunni oil monarchies uniformly described the target of the attack as a "Hezbollah stronghold," effectively lending a measure of justification for the atrocity, whose victims were civilian men, women and

children.

In its statement claiming credit for the bombing, ISIS itself made no mention of Hezbollah's presence in Syria, instead declaring its aim was to slaughter "apostates," the derogatory term it uses to describe Shiite Muslims. It has enjoyed support for such viciously sectarian policies from Washington's main allies in the region, including the Saudi and Qatari monarchical regimes.

While ISIS may have meant to slaughter Lebanese Shiite civilians, reports indicated that many of the victims were Syrian Sunnis who have fled the bloodbath in their own country. An estimated 1.5 million Syrians have sought refuge in Lebanon, which has a population of barely 4 million.

One motive for the bombing is undoubtedly the desire of the Syrian "rebels" and their backers to further destabilize Lebanon and create conditions for a new civil war aimed at breaking the power of Hezbollah.

The White House issued a hypocritical statement condemning the terrorist attacks, while making clear that it hopes to exploit them to further its drive for hegemony in the region. The bombings, it said, "only reinforce our commitment to support the institutions of the Lebanese state, including the security services."



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