

Erbil Rocked by Suicide Bomb

Author: [Najat Ahmed](#)

Kurdish city targeted one day after new Iraqi cabinet sworn in.

A suicide bomber carrying explosives blew himself up on May 4 outside a local Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP, office that also serves as a police recruitment centre, killing at least 46 people and injuring more than a hundred others.

It was the deadliest insurgent attack in two months and came a day after a new cabinet was sworn in, despite disagreements over the defence minister post and other obstacles that resulted in the appointment of five acting ministers.

Most of the victims were from surrounding villages as opposed to residents of Erbil, which is the capital of the western part of Iraqi Kurdistan and is the power base for the KDP. Erbil is located about 353 kilometres northwest of Baghdad.

Around 200 people were queuing up to apply for police service jobs at the Interior Force Committee of the KDP, some 500 metres from the popular Sheraton Hotel. They were all young adults, as the criteria for employment stipulated that applicants be between the ages of 19 and 26.

After the explosion, there was chaos and confusion as a crowd gathered in the area to help the victims. Large pools of blood formed and shoes were scattered across the ground.

According to a statement released on the internet, the militant group Ansar al-Sunna has claimed responsibility for the bombing, and has vowed to carry out more attacks on Kurds.

Witness Ali Mohammed, a shop owner, was only 200 metres away from the explosion site and used his car to take four of the victims to the hospital.

“When I came back, I found a head hanging from one of the trees of our garden,” he said.

Victim Shirwan Hamakhan, 26, who was at the Erbil Emergency Hospital, said he was sitting behind several queuing men when the explosion occurred. A piece of shrapnel was lodged in his stomach and he also received injuries to his face, shoulders and legs.

“When the explosion happened, all of those who were in front of me were killed,” he told IWPR.

Sarhang Khalid, 22, was also waiting in line, said that he could not remember anything about the explosion. “When I woke up, I found myself in the hospital,” said Khalid, who received injuries to his face, hands and legs.

To date, the northern Kurdish area has been spared the worst of the violence that has plagued the rest of the country. The last major attack was in February 2004, when more than 100 people were killed in Erbil after two suicide bombers blew themselves up at a large reception.

And the last large-scale attack in Iraq was on March 10, when more than 50 people were killed during a funeral in Kirkuk, located north of Baghdad.

About 200 people have been killed since the National Assembly approved a partial cabinet on April 28, comprising few Sunnis, despite them being offered six of the seven cabinet posts they sought.

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'afari, of the largely Shia United Iraqi Alliance coalition, continued negotiations on May 4 to fill the disputed posts. Besides the defence minister post, which was supposed to go to a Sunni, the key post of oil minister was also under negotiation. Two deputy minister posts also remain vacant.

At the swearing-in ceremony on May 3, half of the 275-strong National Assembly members were absent, including Vice President Ghazi al-Yawer, a Sunni who has threatened to quit his post over the cabinet positions.

Najat Ahmed and Rebwar Hassan are reporters for the Sulaimaniyah-based Hawlati newspaper.

Location: [Iraqi Kurdistan](#)
[Iraq](#)

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/erbil-rocked-suicide-bomb>