

**45 Killed in Sectarian Bombings in Pakistan**  
**By Salman Masood**  
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ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — In a deadly sectarian attack, at least 54 people were killed Friday evening and about 75 wounded when two bombs ripped through a town in a tribal region of northwestern Pakistan, officials said. A militant group affiliated with the Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility. Most of the dead in Parachinar, the main town of the Kurram tribal region near Afghanistan, were believed to be Shiite Muslims.

Kurram, a remote tribal region of rice paddies and fruit orchards, has long simmered with sectarian tensions, and its predominantly Shiite population has come under repeated attacks by Sunni Taliban militants.

In 2009, the Taliban blocked all routes from Kurram leading to the rest of Pakistan, and Shiites had to go through Afghanistan to make their way to Peshawar and other Pakistani cities. The road is now open, but despite a number of government military operations, the situation remains grim for Shiites in Kurram and elsewhere in Pakistan as extremist Sunni militants have targeted them in a vicious cycle of violence.

In the first blast, officials said, explosives were detonated near a Shiite mosque around 6 p.m. Friday as people were busy shopping for food to end their daily fast during the month of Ramadan. Minutes later, another explosion ripped through a nearby neighborhood, causing widespread destruction and pandemonium.

"The first explosion was caused by a suicide bomber," Riaz Mehsud, a senior government official in Parachinar, said by telephone. "We don't know as yet as what caused the second bombing."

He said security precautions had been taken but militants might have taken advantage of the easing of security close to iftar, the time to end fasting. "Most of the casualties occurred near the central mosque," Mr. Mehsud said.

The explosions damaged several vehicles and storefronts. The wounded were ferried to the main hospital, where many of them are believed to be in critical condition, officials said.

Shiite leaders expressed outrage at the bombings and announced a three-day mourning period.

Agha Hamid Moosvi, a senior Shiite leader who is the head of Tehreek Nafaz Fiqh-e-Jafariya, a Shiite political group, urged the government to provide more security to Shiites. "Shiites and Sunni Muslims are brothers," Mr. Moosvi said. "People should remain peaceful and foil the plans of the enemy by showing unity."

*Ismail Khan contributed reporting from Peshawar, Pakistan.*

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