

Deadly terror strike in Karachi, 45 killed ISIS claims responsibility

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JPNN/Karachi/May13,2015/Kalashnikov-wielding IS militants donning police uniforms today gunned down 45 Shia Ismaili Muslims, shooting them in the head as they attacked their bus in Pakistan's volatile Karachi city as the dreaded terror outfit claimed carrying out their first attack in the region. In the latest cold-blooded sectarian violence targetting the minority Shia community, six to eight motorbike-borne assailants opened fire indiscriminately at the pink bus ferrying

over 60 people to a community centre to stop it, police said. They first opened fire on the bus just near the Dow Medical College around 9.30 am and then entered the bus when it stopped at Safoora Chorangi, Gulistan-e-Johar, a relatively deserted area on the outskirts of the city. The attackers killed 45 people - 26 men and 17 women and wounded more than 20 others before fleeing from the scene, police said. "It was a targeted attack," Sindh Police Inspector General Ghulam Haider Jamali told reporters. A senior police official said the attackers entered the bus and shot the passengers in the head. A blood-stained pamphlet of terrorist group Islamic State was recovered from the scene, according to a police official. Later, the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the grisly attack and said they gunned down 43 people. "Thanks be to Allah, 43 apostates were killed and around 30 were wounded in an attack carried out by Islamic State soldiers on a bus transporting Shiite Ismaili infidels in the city of Karachi," the extremist group said in a statement posted on jihadist Twitter accounts. It was the first official claim of responsibility by the IS leadership of an attack in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. The passenger bus run by a welfare service of the Ismaili community was taking men, women and children to the city centre for jobs and schooling from a low cost housing society when six unidentified men on three motorcycles stopped the bus after firing on it and then entered into the bus and shot dead 45 passengers.

According to a woman survivor, the attackers stopped the bus and then entered from the rear door and initially targeted the driver. She added that the occupants of the bus thought that robbers had embarked on the vehicle. They separated two children and then shot at the driver. They told the passengers to keep their heads low. One of the attackers near the rear side of the bus then ordered his associates to shoot everyone after which they indiscriminately targeted all passengers of the bus, she said, adding that the attackers were speaking fluent Urdu. This was

the worst attack targeting the members of the minority community after a suicide bomber in January blew himself up in a Shia mosque in Shikarpur in the Sindh province killing 61 worshippers and bystanders. The bus was disfigured with bullet holes and blood dripped out of its doors on to the concrete on the road. A rescue official quoted a victim as saying that the attackers were dressed in police uniforms. Investigation Officer Tariq Jadoon said that some blue caps, which are used by security guards, have also been recovered from the crime scene along with 9mm casings. Initial probe showed the attackers used three different weapons in the attack. Jamali said empty bullet shells of pistols and Kalashnikovs were also found at the scene. Rana M Razzaq, a security coordinator at the Memon Medical Center where the injured were taken, told reporters that the conductor, despite being injured, drove the bus to the hospital with the dead and the injured. He said that the conductor brought 43 dead bodies while two injured persons later passed away while being treated.

The spiritual leader of the Ismaili community The Aga Khan expressed shock and sorrow over the attack. "This attack represents a senseless act of violence against a peaceful community. My thoughts and prayers are with the victims and the families of those killed and wounded in the attack," he said. The Aga Khan noted that the Ismailis are a peaceful global community living in harmony with other religious and ethnic groups in many countries across the world, including in the Muslim world. In Islamabad, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif presided over a high-level meeting of political leaders in which all of them pledged support to the government to continue its war on terror and terrorist organisations. The Prime Minister, who will chair a high-level law and order meeting here, also announced that a day of mourning would be observed in Pakistan tomorrow and the national flag will fly at half-mast to mourn the dead. Army chief General Raheel Sharif vowed to hunt down the perpetrators of the deadly attack that has left the political and military leadership in the country stunned. The Army chief, who cancelled a scheduled three-day visit to Sri Lanka after the attack, flew into Karachi to chair a high-level meeting at the Corp Commanders headquarters. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, who strongly condemned the attack, ordered immediate suspension of the area's Station House Officer (SHO) and District Superintendent of Police (DSP). Earlier, Jundullah - a splinter group of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) that vowed allegiance to the ISIS had claimed responsibility for the attack. However, the government has not named any group for the attack so far. He also announced a compensation of Rs 5,00,000 for the relatives of those killed in the massacre and Rs 2,00,000 compensation for those wounded. The bus was operated daily from the Al Azhar housing society for the Ismaili community, he said. This is not the first that the members of the Ismaili community have been targeted in Karachi but never on such a big scale. Agency