

Iran blast: Twin assault on parliament, Khomeini shrine by ISIS kills 12; four terrorists killed

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Tehran: The Islamic State claimed its first attacks in Iran as gunmen and suicide bombers killed at least 12 people and left 42 others wounded in twin assaults on parliament and the tomb of the country's revolutionary founder in Tehran. A suicide bomber targeted the shrine of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Twin assault on parliament, Khomeini shrine by ISIS kills 12

A security guard and one other person were killed when four gunmen burst into Tehran's parliament complex with rifles and a pistol, according to the ISNA news agency.

One of the attackers blew himself up on the fourth floor of the parliament office building as a standoff with police continued for several hours, AFP reported.

IRNA quoted the Head of Imam Khomeini Mausoleum Public Relations Office Ali Khalili as saying that one of the armed men detonated himself in front of a bank outside the the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini in southern Tehran.

In the coordinated mid-morning attack, a gardener was reported dead and several more injured when armed assailants entered the grounds of Ruhollah Khomeini mausoleum in the south of the city.

Two attackers -- at least one female -- blew themselves up outside the shrine, according to local media.

Iran's emergency services said they were dealing with 33 injured from the attacks and that two people had died from their injuries in hospital.

It marks the first attack in Iran claimed by the ISIS, which is at war with Iranian-backed forces in Syria and Iraq.

The IS group's Amaq news agency released a 24-second video purportedly shot inside the parliament building during the siege. The video, circulated online, shows a gunman and a bloody, lifeless body of a man lying on the ground next to a desk.

A voice on the video praises God and says in Arabic: "Do you think we will leave? We will remain, God willing." Another voice repeats the same words. The two appeared to be parroting a slogan used by IS spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, who was killed in Syria last year.

An Associated Press reporter saw several police snipers on the rooftops of buildings around the parliament. Shops in the area were shuttered, and gunfire could be heard. Witnesses said the attackers were shooting from the fourth floor of the parliament building down at people in the streets below.

“I was passing by one of the streets. I thought that children were playing with fireworks, but I realized people are hiding and lying down on the streets,” Ebrahim Ghanimi, who was around the parliament building when the assailants stormed in, told The Associated Press. “With the help of a taxi driver, I reached a nearby alley.”

Police helicopters circled over the parliament building and all mobile phone lines from inside were disconnected. The semi-official ISNA news agency said all entrance and exit gates at parliament were closed and that lawmakers and reporters were ordered to remain in place inside the chamber during the siege.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani called the attack a cowardly act.

“Iran is an active and effective pillar in the fight against terrorists and they want to damage it,” he said.

Soon after the parliament attack, a suicide bomber and other assailants targeted the shrine of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini located just outside the capital, Tehran, according to Iran’s official state broadcaster. It said a security guard was killed and that one of the attackers was killed by security guards. A woman was also arrested.

Khomeini, who died in 1989, is a towering figure in Iran. He led the 1979 Islamic revolution that toppled the Western-backed shah and became Iran’s first supreme leader.

An Associated Press reporter saw security forces, some uniformed and others in plainclothes, around the large and ornate shrine.

The IS group often claims attacks around the world, even when links to the group cannot be confirmed and appear dubious. Iranian security officials have not said who they suspect is behind the attacks, though state media has referred to the attackers as “terrorists.”

The unusual attacks prompted the Interior Ministry to call for an urgent security meeting. Officials at one point urged people to avoid using public transportation until further notice.

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