

At Least 54 Dead, 88 Wounded in Pakistan Suicide Bombing

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The attack took place at 6:15 p.m. at the Wagah border crossing point, shortly after the end of a daily flag-lowering ceremony, which the two nations have performed for decades and which is very popular among tourists, police spokesman Bilal Lal said.

The suicide bomber, a young man 18 to 22 years of age, detonated the explosives he was carrying in a crowd of people who were walking toward the nearby parking lot after the ceremony, which had taken place some 500 meters (yards) from the border, Lal said.

He said that the fatalities included 10 women and five children and the death toll will probably rise, given the very serious condition of about 20 of the wounded, who were taken to the nearby Ghurki Hospital and others.

Local television broadcasts show images of shops and buildings destroyed by the blast.

Two groups – the Al Qaeda-linked Jundullah and the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar organization, which just split off from the main Pakistani Taliban group, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan – claimed responsibility for the attack, according to The Express Tribune and Dawn newspaper, respectively.

Each day at the Wagah border crossing point, which is near the Pakistani city of Lahore and the Indian city of Amritsar, a military ceremony is performed that recalls the rivalry between the two nations, an event that delights local and foreign tourists.

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Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif offered his condolences to the families of the dead, according to Radio Pakistan, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi did the same on Twitter.
