

At least 32 killed in Al-Shabaab attack on busy Mogadishu beach

AFP- An Al-Shabaab suicide bomber and gunmen attacked a busy beach in the Somali capital Mogadishu killing at least 32 people and wounding scores more, police said on Saturday, in one of the deadliest strikes in the East African country in months.

The Al-Qaeda-linked jihadists have been waging an insurgency against the internationally backed federal government for more than 17 years and have previously targeted the Lido beach area, popular with business people and officials.

Unverified videos shared online in the immediate aftermath of the attack late Friday showed people scattering along a street, with a number of clips purporting showing bloodied bodies lying on the beachfront.

“More than 32 civilians died in this attack and about 63 others were wounded, some of them critically,” police spokesman Abdifatah Adan Hassan told reporters during a press conference.

“Targeting and blasting to kill 32 members from the civilian population means these Kharijites are not going to target only government centres, soldiers and officials,” he said, using the term Somali officials adopt to describe Al-Shabaab.

The assault, for which Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility in a post on a pro-Shabaab website, began when a suicide bomber detonated a device and gunmen stormed the area.

Officer Mohamed Omar told AFP members of the group had “shot civilians randomly”.

He said security forces had ended the attack and killed five gunmen, while a sixth member of the group “blew himself (up) at the beach”.

Witnesses said there were many people at the popular location when the explosion occurred, describing how gunmen then stormed the area.

– Immense devastation –

Hawo Mohamed, who lives near the scene, said at least seven people he knew had died in the attack.

“The devastation is immense and there is blood, and severed pieces of human flesh strewn in the scene,” he told AFP.

Witness Abdilatif Ali was at the beach when the attackers struck and described the chaos and fear that unfolded late at night.

“Everybody was panicked and it was hard to know what was happening because shooting started soon after the blast,” he told AFP.

“I saw many people strewn (on the ground) and some of them were dead and others wounded,” he said.

Ahmed Yare witnessed it unfold from a nearby hotel.

“I saw wounded people at the beachside. People were screaming in panic and it was hard to notice who was dead and who was still alive,” he told AFP.

Hospitals appealed for blood donations following the influx of wounded, local media reported.

Abdulkhaliq Osman, head of the health section of the Kalkaal hospital, told reporters that they had received scores of injured people.

“Eleven of them were transferred to the operations unit for

critical injuries, and those with light injuries were sent home after receiving the necessary medical assistance,” he said.

– Lido beach –

Moussa Faki Mahamat, chairman of the African Union Commission, expressed condolences for the victims in a tweet labelling the incident “horrific” and “callous”.

Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for numerous bombings and attacks in Mogadishu and other parts of the country, whose government is pressing on with an offensive against the Islamist militants.

The Lido area has been the target of previous attacks, including a six-hour Al-Shabaab siege of a beachside hotel in 2023, which left six civilians dead and 10 wounded.

Five people were killed in a powerful car bomb blast at a cafe in the capital last month.

In March, the militants killed three people and wounded 27 in an hours-long siege of another Mogadishu hotel, breaking a relative lull in the fighting.

AFP