

## Iraq: Baghdad suicide car bomb kills 23: police

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BAGHDAD, July 22, 2014 (AFP) - A suicide car bomb explosion ripped through a police checkpoint in Baghdad Tuesday, killing 23 people and wounding more than 40, police and medical sources said.

The suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle at an entrance to the northwestern neighbourhood of Kadhimiyah, a police colonel and an interior ministry official said.

At least five of the those killed were policemen, as were eight of those wounded, said police and medical sources, who both gave figures higher than 40 for the number of wounded.

The predominantly Shiite neighbourhood of Kadhimiyah lies across the Tigris river from the mainly Sunni district of Adhamiyah and is frequently targeted when sectarian tension in the country is high.

The neighbourhood, which is home to one of the holiest Shiite shrines, is named after Musa Kadhim, the seventh of 12 revered imams in that branch of Islam.

Another three people were killed when a suicide car bomb went off in a market area in the town of Nahrawan, around 20 kilometres (12 miles) southeast of the capital, a senior police officer told AFP. At least eight were wounded.

Car bombs, killings and kidnappings have escalated in recent months in Baghdad and other parts of the country.

The Sunni-Shiite conflict blew up into a fully-fledged civil war when jihadist-led Sunni militants swept across Iraq's north and west.

Some Sunni groups have rallied behind the Islamic State organisation, which has declared a "caliphate" straddling Iraq and Syria, while Shiite volunteers have been flocking to join militias to counter it.

The Sunni militants' offensive stopped before they reached Baghdad but pre-existing cells have continued to wreak havoc in the capital.

Kadhimiyah was last hit on Saturday, when two near-simultaneous car bomb blasts killed at least eight people on Saturday.

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