

Terrifying moment Muslim worshippers run for their lives after bomb explodes at packed mosque as Tripoli death toll rises to 42

- **Twin blasts hit two mosques in the city during Friday prayers**
- **Disturbing footage shows moment bomb ripped through al-Salam mosque**
- **Attack believed to be spillover from ongoing civil war in neighbouring Syria**

By Steve Robson

This is the horrifying moment one of two bombs exploded in mosques in Tripoli today, killing at least 42 people and injuring hundreds.

Disturbing footage obtained by local news channel LBCI News shows the enormous impact of the explosion which struck the al-Salam mosque just as locals were finishing prayers in the largely Sunni Muslim city.

The blast ripped through a wall of the mosque, showering clouds of dust on people sitting on prayer mats and sending dozens running out of the building.



Terror: Worshippers sit calmly in prayer at al-Salam mosque in Tripoli moments before the blast



Obliteration: The mosque disappears behind a cloud of dust as the bomb rips through the side of the building



Desperate escape: As the smoke starts to clear, worshippers begin running from the building

The apparently coordinated blasts - the biggest and deadliest in Tripoli since the end of Lebanon's own civil war - are likely to intensify the sectarian strife which has spilled over into the country from neighbouring Syria. The explosions in Tripoli, 43 miles from Beirut, came a week after a huge car bomb killed at least 24 people in a part of the capital controlled by the Shi'ite Muslim militant movement Hezbollah. A recent resurgence of sectarian violence in Lebanon has been stoked by the bloodshed in Syria, where President Bashar al-Assad is fighting a largely Sunni-led rebellion. Both Hezbollah and radical Sunni groups in Lebanon have sent fighters over the border to support opposing sides in Syria.

Moment deadly blasts rock mosque in Tripoli



Impact: Lebanese army soldiers stand next to a blast crater outside one of the mosques following the attack



Deadly: At least 42 people have been killed and hundreds more injured as a result of the bombs



Horrorific: Worshippers had just begun Friday prayers when the bomb blasts went off

Medical and security sources said the death toll from today's blasts in Tripoli had risen to 42 by late afternoon. Hundreds more were wounded. Earlier, the Lebanese Red Cross said at least 500 people were hurt. The first explosion hit the Taqwa mosque, frequented by hardline Sunni Islamists, and killed at least 14 people there, according to accounts earlier in the day.

Further deaths were reported from a second blast outside the al-Salam mosque, which the Interior Ministry said was hit by a car laden with 100 kilograms of explosives.

A Reuters reporter at the scene said the crater from the blast was about four metres wide and 2.5 metres deep and the floors of the mosque were covered in blood. A 50-metre stretch of the road was charred black and the twisted remains of cars littered the area.

'We were just bowing down to pray for the second time and the bomb went off. The air cleared, and I looked around me and saw bodies,' said Samir Jadool, 39.



Bloodshed: A man recites prayers amid the destruction after the car bomb outside the Al-Taqwa mosque



Destruction: Charred cars are all that remain following the deadly attack

Lebanon's Red Cross said more than 500 people were wounded in the two explosions. Television footage showed people running through the streets, some of them carrying bloodied victims. Near the Taqwa mosque blast site, angry men toting AK-47 assault rifles took to the streets and fired in the air while other men threw rocks at Lebanese soldiers nearby.



Attack: The violence is believed to be spillover from the ongoing civil war in Syria

Lebanese officials called for calm as tensions rose in Tripoli, a Mediterranean port that has seen some of the worst Syria crossover violence. Sunni gunmen have sporadically clashed with fighters from the city's minority Alawite sect, an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam to which the Assad family belongs.

Former internal security chief Ashraf Rifi, whose home was damaged by the second blast, warned that Lebanon was facing a gathering storm of violence.

'We are still in the beginning of the storm and we must remain aware and try to protect this nation,' he said, speaking outside his home. 'This storm has become a huge, grave danger.'

Witnesses at the scene of the blasts said anger was rising among locals, who were shouting out accusations that Assad's government or Hezbollah were behind the attack.

Hezbollah released a statement condemning the Tripoli blasts and expressing solidarity with the victims, saying they were targets of efforts to fan more violence in Lebanon.

'We consider this the completion of an effort to plunge Lebanon into chaos and destruction,' the statement said. Hezbollah's political opponents called on the group to withdraw its forces from Syria in response to Friday's attack.

Blasts kill 42 outside two mosques in Lebanon's Tripoli



Call for calm: Lebanese leaders condemned the attacks and asked people not to be drawn into sectarian strife



Fears: A former internal security chief described the attacks as 'the beginning of the storm'



Setback: The attacks are the deadliest since the end of Lebanon's civil war

Lebanese Defence Minister Fayez Ghosn warned against being dragged into deeper sectarian bloodshed. 'We are calling for calm and vigilance, because the aim of this (blasts) is to stoke strife between sects,' he told LBC. The southern suburb of Beirut dominated by Hezbollah has been hit by two car bombs in just over a month. Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah blamed radical Sunni Islamists.

Salem al-Rafei, chief cleric of the Taqwa mosque, is a staunch supporter of Syrian Sunni rebels as well as Lebanese Sunni militants who have joined the anti-Assad battle in Syria.



Disaster: The al-Salam mosque was hit by a bomb containing at least 100kg of explosives, government officials said