

At least 32 killed in new sectarian violence in Pakistan

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Online Desk : At least 32 people were killed and 47 wounded in sectarian clashes in northwest Pakistan, an official told AFP on Saturday, two days after attacks on Shia passengers convoys killed 43. Sporadic fighting between Sunni and Shia Muslims in the mountainous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan has killed around 150 over the past months. “Fighting between Shia and Sunni communities continues at multiple locations. According to the latest reports, 32 people have been killed which include 14 Sunnis and 18 Shias,” a senior administrative official told AFP on condition of anonymity on Saturday. On Thursday, gunmen opened fire on two separate convoys of Shia Muslims traveling with police escorts in Kurram, killing 43 while 11 wounded are still in “critical condition,” officials told AFP.

In retaliation Shia Muslims on Friday evening attacked several Sunni locations in the Kurram district, once a semi-autonomous region, where sectarian violence has resulted in the deaths of hundreds over the years. “Around 7 p.m., a group of enraged Shia individuals attacked the Sunni-dominated Bagan Bazaar,” a senior police officer stationed in Kurram told AFP. “After firing, they set the entire market ablaze and entered nearby homes, pouring petrol and setting them on fire. Initial reports suggest over 300 shops and more than 100 houses have been burned,” he said.

He said local Sunnis “also fired back at the attackers.” Javedullah Mehsud, a senior official in Kurram said there were “efforts to restore peace ... (through) the deployment of security forces” and with the help of “local elders.” Tribal and family feuds are common in Sunni-majority Pakistan, where the Shia community has long suffered discrimination and violence. The latest clashes and attacks come just days after at least 20 soldiers were killed in separate incidents in the province. Last month, at least 16 people, including three women and two children, were killed in a sectarian clash in the district. Previous clashes in July and September killed dozens of people and ended only after a jirga, or tribal council, called a ceasefire.

Source : Al Arabiya