

Beat: Miscellaneous

Gunmen execute 15 bus passengers in western Afghanistan

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USPA News - Unidentified gunmen stopped two passenger buses in western Afghanistan on Friday and killed fifteen passengers execution-style after checking their identification cards, officials said on Saturday. It was not immediately known who was responsible.

The incident happened early Friday morning when a group of gunmen stopped two unrelated passenger buses in the district of La'l wa Sar Jangal district in the remote province of Ghor. "Fifteen passengers, including three women and a child, were brutally executed by firing squad," a spokesman for Afghan President Hamid Karzai said. Karzai condemned the massacre in "the strongest terms" and ordered provincial authorities to investigate the circumstances surrounding the killings and to find those responsible. Provincial police blamed the Taliban for the killings, but the insurgent group did not issue a claim of responsibility. Officials from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said one bus was stopped first, after which the passengers were ordered to step out before being lined up and shot. Minutes later, a second vehicle was also stopped, after which two passengers were shot dead before the others were released. It was not immediately known why the passengers were targeted, but local officials said some of the victims were singled out after the gunmen checked their ID cards. The passenger buses were en-route to the capital Kabul. One man who was also about to be killed managed to escape. "The killing of civilians by an armed group in Ghor province is deeply troubling, especially when Afghans nationwide are preparing to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr with their families," said Nicholas Haysom, the UN's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and acting head of UNAMA. "Afghans should be able to celebrate in peace, and such attacks must cease at once."

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com