

Over 100 Killed as Blasts Hit Near Russian Military Bases in Syria's Latakia Province

By [RT](#)

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Over 100 people are feared dead after seven blasts targeted several locations in the coastal towns of Jableh and Tartus, Syria's Latakia province, according to media reports. The locations are close to two Russian military facilities: the Khmeimim airbase and the Tartus naval base.

Islamic State militants claimed the attacks saying via its news outlet, Amaq, that "gatherings of Alawites in Tartous and Jableh" had been targeted. The Alawites is the minority sect to which President Bashar Assad belongs.

According to Ikhbariya TV, there were up to three explosions in the coastal town of Jableh near the local railway terminal. RIA Novosti and state TV also report a fourth explosion, at the emergency unit of a local hospital.

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Sham FM radio [claims](#) that the first explosion in Jableh occurred at the entrance to the town, where a car with an estimated equivalent of 250 kg of TNT inside blew up.

Another three explosions were reportedly carried out by suicide bombers, and at least one of them was believed to be a woman.

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Three more blasts were reported in a residential area of another coastal town, Tartus, eyewitnesses told RIA Novosti.

At least 20 were killed there, SANA and RIA Novosti said citing police sources.

According to Syrian state TV, one of the Tartus explosions was a car bomb, while another was caused by a suicide bomber.



People inspect the damage after explosions hit the Syrian city of Tartous, in this handout picture provided by SANA on May 23, 2016. © SANA / Reuters

Both towns targeted by Monday attacks are close to facilities used by the Russian task force in Syria.

The port of Tartus has been used for years by the Russian Navy as a feeder base. The port has been extensively used for delivering military supplies to the Russian contingent in the country.

An eye-witness of the blast in Tartus told RT that the bus station that was targeted was destroyed.

“Most of the bus-station is down, completely destroyed. It’s very new to this city, it’s never happened before. People are angry, and sad.”

The Martyr Basil al-Assad International Airport, next to Jableh, has hosted Russia’s Khmeimim airbase and reconciliation center since September 2015.



Syrian army soldiers and civilians inspect the damage after explosions hit the Syrian city of Tartous, in this handout picture provided by SANA on May 23, 2016. © SANA / Reuters

Syrian journalist and RT contributor Alaa Ibrahim, who is currently in Damascus, described the attack in Jableh to RT, predicting the death toll may rise throughout the day.

“The last attack was on a hospital, a female suicide attacker with a veil on her head came into the hospital in Jableh city and blew herself up, killing over 15 new persons and destroying the emergency room, the main emergency room of the city, which will make it more difficult to help those who suffered in other explosions, making the death toll likely to rise in the upcoming hours,” Alaa Ibrahim stated.

He also said it is the first time the cities of Tartus and Jableh, which support the Assad

government, have been targeted and claimed it is a clear sign to the government to beware.

“These are not ordinary attacks. These are some of the largest attacks we’ve seen since the war in Syria began. [...] The cities of Jableh and Tartus are considered to be the main ‘castles’ of support for the Syrian government. A large number of government supporters reside in these areas. A large number of soldiers coming from Jableh and Tartus were killed fighting for the Syrian government. This is why ISIL [Islamic State/IS, formerly ISIS] made it very clear to carry out these attacks with such ferocity,” Alaa Ibrahim pointed out.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent his Syrian counterpart Bashar Assad a telegram of condolence over the deaths of civilians in Monday’s attacks.

“The Russian president stressed that this tragedy was more evidence of the barbaric, inhumane nature of the terrorist groups who unleashed a bloody war against the people of Syria,” the telegram reads.

President Putin also confirmed Russia’s readiness to continue cooperation with Syria in countering terrorism, the Kremlin press service reports.

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