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Lebanon: Indiscriminate bomb attack in busy residential area of Beirut

A large explosion reportedly from a car bomb attack in the busy Ashrafiya residential district in downtown Beirut killed at least eight people and wounded dozens more on Friday.

Among those reportedly killed was Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan, the head of the information branch at Lebanon's internal security – but numerous bystanders are also believed to be among the dead and wounded.

Ann Harrison, Amnesty International's Deputy Middle East and North Africa Programme Director said:

“Today's attack which killed at least eight people and injured scores of residents in a bustling area of downtown Beirut and was an indiscriminate attack that should be condemned in the strongest terms.

“That it happened during rush hour in a busy residential area meant it put the lives of many people, including children, in danger.”

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati said the government was trying to identify the perpetrators and said they would be punished.

“The Lebanese authorities must carry out a thorough investigation into who was behind the attack and ensure those responsible are brought to justice in trials that meet international fair trial standards, without recourse to the death penalty.”

Wissam al-Hassan led investigations into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005. He was part of the anti-Syrian political movement the Future Movement. Internal Security Forces foiled an assassination attempt on al-Hassan's life in early 2012.

The Syrian Information Minister Omran al-Zoubi has also condemned the attack, calling it a "cowardly terrorist act".