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Lebanon: No excuse for targeting civilians

Those behind Thursday's deadly attack in a Hizbullah-dominated area in southern Beirut must stop targeting civilians, Amnesty International said today after more than 20 people were killed in the third incident in the last three months.

A group that calls itself "Brigade of Aisha Umm al-Mo'mineen", about whom very little is known, claimed responsibility for the bomb attack, saying it was in retaliation for Hizbullah's role in supporting the Syrian government.

On a video posted on YouTube, three masked men carrying arms vowed to launch more attacks against what they called "Iranian colonies" in Lebanon in an apparent reference to Hizbullah strongholds.

However, doubts were raised regarding the likelihood of an unknown group being behind the deadly attack, which took place in a highly secured area of Beirut.

"Whoever is responsible for the attack has shown utter disregard for humanity and has violated all human rights principles," said Philip Luther, Middle East and North Africa Director at Amnesty International.

"No matter how strongly they might feel about Hizbullah's role in the armed conflict in Syria, there is absolutely no excuse for targeting civilians."

The attack on a Hizbullah-dominated busy residential area in southern Beirut, which also left more than 300 injured, is the third to have taken place in the past three months.

A smaller bomb exploded in Beirut's southern suburbs in July, reportedly wounding over 50 people. In May, rockets struck the southern suburbs.

All three attacks seem to have targeted people living in Beirut's southern suburbs who are perceived as sympathetic with Hizbullah.

The "Brigades of Aisha Umm al-Mo'mineen" has also claimed responsibility for the July bomb attack.

The Lebanese authorities have announced an investigation into Thursday's bomb attack.

"The investigation into the abhorrent crimes should be impartial and those responsible must be brought to justice," said Philip Luther.