Blast rocks Egypt tourist district
One dead and more than 20 hurt in explosion near mosque at Cairo’s Khan el-Khalili bazaar.
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A bomb blast at the heart of the Egyptian capital's tourist district has left one person dead and 23 injured.

Police said a French woman was killed in the explosion on Sunday outside Cairo's historic Hussein mosque in the popular Khan el-Khalili bazaar area.

Egyptian, French, German and Saudi nationals were injured by flying stone and marble fragments, a police official at the scene said.

"It was an explosive, perhaps a hand grenade," one police official said.

Details remained sketchy but the interior ministry said in a statement that bombs were planted under a seat near a cafe just outside the al-Hussein Hotel.

The Egyptian Middle East news agency, quoting witnesses, earlier reported that explosive devices were thrown from the roof of a nearby hotel.

Blood stains could be seen in the front courtyard of the mosque, next to the famed bazaar.

Police later detonated a second device without causing any injuries.

Three arrested

Riot police cordoned off the area and sniffer dogs could be seen as the mosque was evacuated.

"I was praying and there was a big boom and people started panicking
and rushing out of the mosque, then police came and sealed the main
door, evacuating us out of the back," said Mohammed Abdel Azim, who was inside the mosque
at the time.

Amr el-Kahky, Al Jazeera's correspondent in Cairo, said no one had claimed responsibility for
the attacks but police had detained three suspects for questioning.

He said some analysts had suggested a link to Israel's
offensive against Gaza last month, in which Egypt was
criticised in the Arab world for not opening its Rafah
border crossing with Gaza and not doing enough to help
the Palestinians.

Speaking to Al Jazeera, Samer Shehata, an expert in
Arab politics from Georgetown University in the US, said
it was unlikely that the attacks were carried out by a
purely Egyptian group.

"It could have been Egyptians or a group that is affiliated
to al-Qaeda or sympathetic to the international terror network," he said, adding that the
Egyptian government had taken a very unpopular position during the Gaza war.

Shehata pointed out that attacks in the past had targeted Egyptian tourism because it was one
of the country's leading sources of revenue and employment.

"Hitting the tourism sector is a direct blow to the state. The fact is previous attacks have also
occurred in this sector, as opposed to targeting government officials or buildings."

The historic district was the scene of a previous bomb attack in 2005 in which two tourists were
killed and 18 wounded.

Source: Al Jazeera and agencies