



A car bomb exploded early today outside a shopping mall in Witbank, a mining town 60 miles east of Johannesburg, killing 2 people and wounding at least 40.

The two men killed were black, as were 19 of the wounded.

The attack was consistent with a bombing campaign by the outlawed African National Congress but no one claimed responsibility for the blast, the 18th urban attack this month.

Bombs have been exploding in South African cities and black townships across the country at the rate of one a day for the last seven weeks in advance of elections for local councils across the nation on Wednesday. Last Big Blast Was July 3

Many of the attacks have been directed at administration and court buildings in black townships and have caused few casualties. Several black participants in the election have been killed in grenade attacks.

Some witnesses said the two men killed in the blast had been inside the car carrying the explosives, but the police could not confirm the report.

Surrounding buildings and about 18 cars were damaged in the explosion. It was the biggest bomb blast since July 3, when two people were killed in a car bomb attack in Johannesburg.

Anti-apartheid and church leaders, like Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu, have urged blacks to boycott the elections to protest apartheid.

The Congress has vowed to disrupt the elections both by political intervention and by sabotage against official buildings, police and military targets.

About 20 civilians have been killed in urban bombings since the beginning of the year.

The Congress leadership in neighboring Zambia has insisted in recent statements that it still applies its policy of avoiding civilian targets, but officials have acknowledged in interviews that some of the attacks might have been carried out by undisciplined guerrillas angered by official action.

They have also suggested that some attacks might have been the work of agents of the state, to discredit the anti-apartheid movement, or even the work of members of rival guerrilla groups such as the more militant Pan Africanist Congress.

The bombing today followed an attack on Friday in the black township of Kwathema, east of Johannesburg, in which a baby was killed and four people were wounded.

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