

3 Dead, Dozens Injured at Armenian Market Explosion

By [AFP](#)

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Smoke rises as a fire breaks out at the Surmalu market in Yerevan, Armenia set off by an explosion.

Alexander Patrin/TASS

An explosion that set off a fire at a market in the Armenian capital Yerevan on Sunday killed three people and injured dozens of others, officials announced.

The fire ripped through the market at Surmalu, said the first reports.

"After preliminary data, an explosion happened which set off a fire," said the emergency situations ministry in a statement, giving a toll of three dead and around 40 people hospitalized.

They also reported that a nearby building had collapsed and published the names of 25 people loved ones were trying to contact, saying they might be trapped under its ruins.

As the search for survivors continued, rescue workers were using a digger to clear away

rubble, an AFP journalist at the scene reported.

They had so far pulled 10 survivors from the rubble and recovered one body, said the ministry statement.

The wholesale market at Surmalu is normally very busy on Sunday afternoons, which is when the blast happened.

The cause of the fire has not yet been established, but local news reports, citing witnesses, said the explosion happened at a place that stored fireworks. The authorities have so far made no statement on what might have caused the fire.

Photos and videos posted on social media showed a thick column of black smoke over the market and what appeared to be a series of detonations can be heard.

Bomb scare

A number of volunteers were also helping at the scene, scrambling to move piles of twisted concrete blocks and metal bars with their bare hands.

Nearby, firefighters kept their hoses trained on the smoking ruins, soaking them down with water.

In all, 200 firefighters and medical workers were sent to the scene, as well as fire engines and construction site equipment.

The disaster comes at a time when the country is already going through a difficult period.

Armenia, a small country with around 3 million inhabitants, is still recovering from the 2020 war with Azerbaijan, which ended in a heavy defeat which in turn sparked a political crisis.

Reflecting the current tensions, the Yerevan metro system was evacuated shortly after the blast following a bomb scare, officials said, adding that no device had been found.

Armenia's neighbor, Russia, said via its embassy that it was trying to establish if any of its citizens were victims of the blast.

It offered its condolences to the families and loved ones of those killed in the disaster.

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