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Three explosions hit Ethiopian capital - police

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ADDIS ABABA (Reuters) - Three explosions rocked the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa around noon on Tuesday, severely injuring four people, police said.

One blast hit the Lalibela restaurant in the southern part of the city, extensively damaging the structure. Restaurant manager Asnketch Makaonnen said the explosion was caused by a bomb planted in a flower pot outside.

"I was in my office, when I heard the explosion I came to the restaurant and I found it filled with smoke. We tried to lead the clients through the back door," Makaonnen said.

"Luckily none of the restaurant staff were injured except four pedestrians," she added.

The other explosion struck a market, also in the south of the city. Police said the device was hidden in a rubbish bin. There were no injuries.

A third blast later occurred outside the gate of a hotel and tourism training centre in the centre of the city. No one was injured in the blast, which damaged a small guard shack at the gate.

Police surrounded all three sites and investigators sifted through the debris.

Ethiopia has been hit by a series of violent protests in which more than 80 people have died since elections in May, which the opposition says were rigged.

Top opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) leaders were among 131 people charged with treason and planning to commit genocide stemming from those protests.

In January, several public buildings and hotels in Addis Ababa were damaged by explosive devices planted by unknown people.

Last month the Federal Police Anti-Terrorism Taskforce issued a statement saying it had foiled a plot to "unleash armed urban terrorism" in the capital by a group linked to the CUD.

The statement said authorities seized a cache of dynamite, bombs and small arms.

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