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The blasts injured more than 90 people

Security has been stepped up in the Philippine capital, Manila, following a series of bombings that killed at least 14 people and injured more than 90.

President Joseph Estrada denounced the attack as "barbaric," blaming them on "desperate and cowardly people" whose only aim was to advance a political agenda.

No group has said it carried out the attack, but suspicion has fallen on Muslim separatist groups.

Most of the casualties were the result of a blast that tore through a crowded train as it pulled into a station. Eyewitnesses spoke of a scene of carnage.

"We are going to use the full force of the law to suppress this violence," said the president on national television.

"Preventive measures have been put in place to ensure public safety, avoid further damage to property and safeguard public utilities," he said, adding that police would guard public areas, particularly bus and train stations.

No martial law

Mr Estrada is fighting for his political life and some opposition politicians had expressed fears that he could use the bombings to declare a state of emergency or impose martial law.

A government spokesman, Michael Toledo, denied the explosions were orchestrated by the president's supporters to deflect attention from his impeachment trial in the Senate.

The blasts came a day after Manila-area police were put on alert

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► The BBC's John McLean in Manila

"Four of the bombs went off within minutes of each other"

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for holiday bombing attacks by the Muslim separatist group Abu Sayyaf.

On Thursday, police arrested Abu Sayyaf spokesman Hector Janjalani in Manila. They said he had several grenades and sketches of potential targets in the city.

Following the bombings the police have said that they are following certain leads, but they are giving no details and being cautious about apportioning blame at this stage.

Witness questioned

One witness has been taken in for questioning, but it is not clear whether this person is a suspect.

The five blasts all occurred around noon (0400 GMT).

- The first explosion ripped through a crowded railway station north of Manila, killing at least 11 people and injuring about 60 others.
- Minutes after the explosion, there was another blast on a passenger bus in the main terminal in the northern suburb of Quezon city, in which at least one person died and 17 were injured.
- There was a third blast when a jeep exploded near an aviation fuel depot at Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport.
- A fourth bomb exploded on a bench in a park outside the US embassy, injuring nine people.
- A fifth bomb was found near the luxury Dusit hotel in a Manila commercial district and exploded as bomb experts tried to defuse it. One bomb expert was killed immediately and another died later in hospital.

Appealing for calm, President Estrada has promised a full investigation of the attacks.

"I have ordered the Philippine national police to immediately undertake an investigation that will lead to the immediate arrest of the culprits," he said.

The attacks come as Filipinos are already grappling with political instability caused by President Estrada's impeachment trial.

The trial began in December month and is to resume on 2 January after a holiday recess.



President Estrada has appealed for calm

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