

Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

22 September 2014

Afghanistan

Security situation

Last week military confrontations have been recorded in the provinces of Kabul, Nangarhar, Baghlan, Kunduz, Zabul, Uruzgan, Maidan Wardak, Khost, Helmand, Ghazni, Kunar, and Sar-i-Pul.

The body of the previously kidnapped governor of Chamkani district in Paktia province in the south-east was found on 15 September 2014. Dozens of NATO tank lorries burst into flames after a suicide bombing in the border town of Torkham in the eastern province of Nangarhar. Another insider attack by an Afghan soldier claimed the life of a US soldier in Herat in the west.

On 16 September 2014 at least three ISAF-soldiers died in a suicide attack in Kabul.

Several civilians were killed in air strikes in Lagham (east) and Paktia (south) on 17 September 2014.

On 18 September 2014 one child was killed and three were injured when a bomb exploded in the province of Faryab in the north.

On 20 September 2014 a high ranking cleric was wounded in a bomb attack in Bagram (province of Parwan, central Afghanistan). The Taliban killed two students as suspected spies in the eastern province of Kunar.

Afghan security forces stated that the Taliban launched about 700 attacks throughout Afghanistan in the last six months, in which 955 civilians and 1,523 policemen were killed. 2,394 civilians and 2,506 policemen had been wounded. The Taliban had lost 5,503 fighters and 2,370 of their men had been wounded.

Journalist assassinated

On 16 September 2014 a female journalist was assassinated in Mazar-e Sharif (province Balkh, northern Afghanistan). She had been working in the German army camp Marmal for four years and had then changed to work for a broadcasting radio station. After receiving threats she had tried to get a permit to travel to Germany.

Formation of government

After many months of controversy the candidates Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani have finally agreed on the formation of a government. Election winner Ashraf Ghani will become President and a kind of prime minister, an office not provided for in the constitution, will be appointed from the camp of Abdullah.

Pakistan

Muslim professor shot after accusations of blasphemy

The director of the Department of Islamic Studies of Karachi University was shot dead by unknown killers on 18 September 2014. Before the assassination other clerics has accused him of blasphemy because of his liberal views.

Execution of death sentence suspended

Following protests of international human rights groups the planned execution of a civilian was suspended, it would have been the first one in six years. A court delayed the execution of the sentence of a murderer convicted in 1998 by one month.

Floods

The regions of Punjab, Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir are suffering from floods after the monsoon rains. The number of casualties has increased to between 300 and 400. It is said that almost 2.3 million people have been affected by the disaster. Over 2,000 people had died in floods in Pakistan four years ago when more than 20 million people were affected.

Iraq

Development of the situation

With US air support the Kurdish Peshmerga succeeded in reconquering seven predominantly Christian villages west of Erbil from the terror militia Islamic State (IS) on 16 September 2014. The press reported on 16 September 2014 that the US had for the first time bombed IS fighters south-west of Baghdad.

On 18 September 2014 at least 20 people were killed and over 50 wounded in an attack on a Shiite district of Baghdad; so far no-one claimed responsibility for the attack.

Turkish hostages released

After more than three months IS released 49 staff members of the Turkish Consulate General in Mosul and their families. No details are known about the circumstances of the release.

No majority for minister candidates

The candidates appointed by Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi for the offices of interior minister and defence minister did not achieve a majority in the Iraqi parliament in its session on 16 September 2014. The session was adjourned.

Iran

Prison sentences on probation and lashes for internet users

Seven young people have been sentenced to prison terms on probation and lashes for uploading a video on the online platform YouTube in May showing them dancing to Pharrell Williams' hit song „Happy“. The Iranian news website "Iranwire" reported that six of the seven Tehran video artists had been sentenced to six months and 91 lashes, while the director had been given a one year prison sentence. The sentenced internet users must serve their prison sentences, if they are arrested again in the next three years, thereafter the sentence will lapse.

Yemen

Peace agreement between the government and the al-Houthi rebels

After weeks of bloody confrontations in Sanaa a peace agreement has been signed between leaders of the Shiite al-Houthi rebels and leading Yemeni politicians. The official Yemeni news agency SABA reported on 21 September 2014 that the agreement was made in the absence of President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi. After the signing of the peace agreement a government of national unity is to be formed in the next days. The agreement had been mediated by the UN Special Representative for Yemen, Jamal Benomar, already on 20 September 2014. The agreement grew out of a very complex situation. On 21 September 2014 the al-Houthi rebels had continued to advance in the capital Sanaa. Irrespective of the ongoing ceasefire negotiations the rebels had stormed the army headquarters and a military base in the city's north, the news site "Al-Masdar Online" reported. While their uprising had mainly affected the al-Houthi's core region in the northern province of Saada since 2004, it expanded to a movement of national significance after July 2014, because this is when the almost bankrupt government decided to cut the petrol price subsidies.

Syria

Kurds flee from Syria to Turkey in masses

The UNHCR informed that after the opening of the border on 19 September 2014 about 100,000 had fled from Syria to Turkey to escape the fighting between the terror militia Islamic State (IS) and Kurdish units. Most of them are Kurdish women, children and elderly people. Another 100,000 refugees are expected to arrive over the next days. The exodus was caused by an IS offensive against the city of Ain al-Arab (Kurdish name Kobani) near the Turkish border. Since 18 September 2014 IS had been taking control of about 60 villages around Ain al-Arab. The Turkish government decided to close the borders to Syria. Already on 21 September 2014 the border to Syria had been temporarily closed, also to prevent Turkish Kurds from fighting against IS in Syria. Since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011 about 1.5 million refugees from Syria arrived in Turkey.

US Congress approves the provision of arms to the Syrian rebels

After the House of Representatives also the US Senate has agreed on 18 September 2014 to training and arming moderate Syrian rebels to fight against the "Islamic State". About 5,000 opposition fighters per year are to be trained in Saudi Arabia. They are to be supplied with small arms, vehicles and simple equipment after the training, once they proved themselves worthy in the fighting, modern weapon systems will be supplied. In their fight against the terror militia the US are supported by over 40 countries, including some Arab states.

Turkey

Reception of two Muslim Brothers

Two leading members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Jamal Abdul Sattar and Amr Darrag, have travelled to Turkey the media reported on 21 September 2014. Turkish President Erdogan announced that Turkey would grant asylum to the Muslim Brothers as long as there were no reasons speaking against it. The two Egyptians and five other Egyptian Muslim Brothers in leading positions had gone to Qatar to avoid imprisonment.

Egypt

Six policemen killed in bombing attack

A police patrol in northern Sinai between the provincial capital of al-Arish and the border town of Rafah was targeted by a bomb attack on 16 September 2014 in which six policemen died and two were wounded. The extremist grouping Ansar Bait al-Maqdis („supporters of Jerusalem“), which is thought to have ties to IS, is active on the Sinai peninsula.

Presumable terrorist attack in Cairo

On 20 September 2014 at least two people died in an explosion near the foreign ministry, one of them reportedly was a policeman.

South Sudan

Fighting in Upper Nile

According to government sources rebels of the SPLA-IO (Sudan People's Army in Opposition) around former Vice-President Riek Machar attacked government troops in the north-east of Renk district in the state of Upper Nile on 18 September 2014. After gaining ground at first, they had then been forced to retreat towards the Sudanese border by the government forces. A SPLA-IO spokesman accused the government of starting the fighting thus violating the ceasefire.

Several oil fields are located near the capital of Renk district that is also called Renk. About 80% of Southern Sudan's oil is produced in Upper Nile.

Nigeria

Serious allegations of torture

In the report "Welcome to Hellfire" published by Amnesty International (ai) on 18 September 2014 the organisation says that torture and serious abuses are routine in criminal investigations for Nigerian police and soldiers nationwide. Many police stations, including the special police to fight robberies and the criminal police, had unofficial "officers in charge of torture" and "torture chambers". Since 2009 an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 people had been detained in the north-east in fighting the terror group Boko Haram. A large number of prisoners who are accused of ties to Boko Haram seem to be affected by torture and other abuse. The use of torture was strongly favoured because there is almost complete impunity for the offenders. In the vast majority of cases in which torture was denounced the authorities did not investigate, the report said.

Twelve soldiers sentenced to death for mutiny

On 16 September 2014 a court martial in Abuja sentenced eleven of 18 accused soldiers to death by shooting for conspiracy for mutiny, mutiny, and attempted murder and another soldier for attempted murder and disobedience. One soldier received a prison sentence and five were acquitted. The soldiers who were sentenced to death were charged with shooting at the bullet-proof vehicle of the commander of the 7th Army Division that is in charge of fighting Boko Haram, Major General A. Mohammed, in Maimalari barracks in Maiduguri, the capital of north-eastern Borno state, in mid-May of this year. The soldiers who had been ambushed by the Boko Haram terror organisation before returning to Maiduguri had held the commander responsible for the death of more than ten of their comrades. The judgment is not yet final.

15 die in Boko Haram attack on college

On 17 September 2014 around 2pm at least three presumed members of Boko Haram attacked the Federal Education College in Kano, the capital of the northern state of the same name. After shooting at the students present in two classrooms one suicide bomber detonated himself in each of them. The third assassin was shot by the police. The incident is said to have resulted in a total of 15 casualties.

Renewed Boko Haram attack on Konduga repelled

The army had succeeded in repelling a Boko Haram attack against the city of Konduga, located only 40 km south-east of Borno's capital Maiduguri, already on 12 September 2014 killing more than 100 terrorists in the process, several hundred Boko Haram fighters launched another attack on Konduga in the night of 16 to 17 September 2014. The army repelled the attack and reported the killing of more than 100 terrorists. The army said that another 60 Boko Haram fighters were killed in fighting in the evening of 17 September 2014, when they tried to rescue the bodies of their commanders that had been shot by the soldiers from Konduga.

More Boko Haram attacks

On 19 September 2014 around 1.30pm Boko Haram fighters attacked the market in Mainok village (Borno state, Kaga Local Government Area - LGA) killing at least 20 civilians. Soldiers caught up with them when they were returning to their base in the city of Damboa and about 50 terrorists are said to have died in the fighting.

In the morning of 17 September 2014 a Boko Haram attack on the village of Ngamdu (Borno state, Kaga LGA) is said to have been repelled by the military and the paper Premium Times reports that about 150 terrorists were killed.

West Africa

UN Security Council classifies Ebola as a threat to world peace

In a special meeting on 18 September 2014 the UN Security Council declared that the Ebola epidemic, that has claimed 2,630 lives so far, is a "threat to world peace and international security" and adopted a resolution to deploy a special mission called UNMEER (United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response). The government in Sierra Leone imposed a curfew from 19 to 21 September 2014 to search for any hidden Ebola patients in a concentrated effort. In the village of Wome in Guinea seven health workers of an Ebola information campaign were attacked and killed by enraged villagers. The World Health Organisation (WHO) fears that the Ebola epidemic will spread in south-eastern Nigeria. The organisation informed that three cases of Ebola have been confirmed in the port city of Port Harcourt in the country's south-east.

Mali

Five UN soldiers killed in northern Mali

On 18 September 2014 a vehicle of the UN mission MINUSMA drove on a land mine in northern Mali, five UN soldiers from Chad died in the explosion and three were wounded. Already ten Chadian soldiers have lost their lives during MINUSMA since early September.

Peace talks resumed

The peace talks initiated in Algiers on 16 July 2014 between the Mali government and six rebel groups ended had preliminarily concluded with the signature of a document to "cease all hostilities" on 24 July 2014. These peace talks were resumed on 01 September 2014. Nothing is known about any outcomes.

Guinea-Bissau

Head of army dismissed

On 15 September 2014 President José Mário Vaz issued a decree by which the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, General Antonio Indjai, was dismissed. As yet the reasons behind this move are not known. Observers assume that the president took this step because of the pressure to reform the military. The military is blamed for the country's role as a significant international drug trafficking hub. General Indjai had been indicted in the US in 2013 for dealing with cocaine and selling arms to Columbian rebels. Other high-ranking military officials from Guinea-Bissau are also charged with drug trafficking in the US.

After a mutiny in 2010 Indjai became supreme commander of the military; in 2012 he masterminded a military putsch. Thereafter a civilian interim government was acting until presidential elections were held in April and May 2014 in which José Mário Vaz won.

On 17 September 2014 General Biague Na Ntan was appointed as Indjai's successor. Just as Indjai he belongs to the ethnicity of the Balanta, to which about 60% of the military and one quarter of the roughly 1.6 million people of the country belong.

Kenya

Terror suspects deported

The two German nationals suspected of membership in al-Shabaab who had been arrested (see BN of 15 September 2014) were deported to Germany on 20 September 2014 and taken into custody there. One of the two also has the Tunisian nationality.

Uganda

Prime minister dismissed

The media reported on 19 September 2014 that President Yoweri Museveni dismissed Prime Minister Amama Mbazazi on the day before. He was succeeded by Ruhakana Ruganda, until now minister of health. The dismissal is said to have been preceded by a power struggle between Museveni and Mbazazi who both belong to the National Resistance Movement (NRM). There were rumours that Mbazazi planned to stand as candidate in the 2016 presidential elections, competing with Museveni who has been in office since 1986.

Serbia/ Bosnia and Herzegovina/ FYR Macedonia

Federal Parliament agrees with classification as safe country of origin

In its session on 19 September 2014 the Second Chamber of the German Parliament (Bundesrat) adopted a law classifying Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the FYR Macedonia as safe countries of origin. Until the very last moment the majority had been uncertain, because at least one vote of the Grüne Party or

the Linke Party was required, despite the opposition of the federal leadership of both parties to this classification. After negotiations with the Federal Government the federal state of Baden-Wurttemberg voted for the law which will enter into force as soon as it has been promulgated.

These countries will now be considered as safe countries of origin within the meaning of section 16a(3) of the German constitution and section 29a of the German Asylum Procedure Act. This means that the law presumes that in these countries there are neither political persecution, inhuman nor degrading punishments or treatment. This presumption will hold unless the applicant shows credible evidence that substantiates the assumption that he is politically persecuted, despite this presumption.

China

Xinjiang: Explosions kill and injure people

There were at least two casualties and many wounded in explosions in at least three different locations in Luntai district on 21 September 2014. Nothing is as yet known about the causes.

Xinjiang: Trial against prominent government critic started

On 17 and 18 September 2014 the trial against the well-known Uyghur activist Ilham Tohti was held at the People's Intermediate Court in Ürümqi. The professor of economics had been arrested on 15 January 2014 on charges of separatism and incitement to ethnic hatred. The representatives of nine western embassies who had travelled to the court were not allowed in the courtroom as observers. Ilham Tohti is considered to be peaceful advocate of better relations between the Uyghurs and the central government. He is facing a long prison sentence. The sentence is expected for the near future.

Tibet: Long prison term for anti-Chinese protest

On 17 September 2014 Radio Free Asia reported that a court in Chamdo (chin: Changdu) had sentenced a Buddhist monk to ten years in prison. He had disrupted official celebrations of the Communist Party in July 2013 among other things by shouting slogans for the independence of Tibet.

Tibet: Self-immolation

On 17 September 2014 a Tibetan student burnt himself in Tsoe (Hezuo) county in Kanlho (in Chinese, Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu province; this is the first case of self-immolation that became known since April 2014. This brings the total number of these incidents since 2009 to 132.

Hong Kong: Student strikes

On 22 September 2014 thousands of university students started a one week strike in over a dozen colleges with the support of several hundred university staff. The strike, rallies and other activities are staged in protest against the central government's denial of an open nomination of the candidates for the elections of the head of the Hong Kong government in 2017.