

## Group 41 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

11 November 2013

### Afghanistan

#### Security situation

The bodies of seven soldiers abducted by the Taliban were found near the town of Qalat (Zabul province, southern Afghanistan) on 6 November 2013. Since international troops began withdrawing from the country, Afghan security forces have increasingly become the target of attacks by rebels.

On 8 November 2013, eight civilians were killed near the city of Qalat (Zabul province, southern Afghanistan) when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb. Several people were wounded. Two men and one child were killed in Ghorak district (Kandahar province, southern Afghanistan) when their motorbike hit a roadside bomb.

### Pakistan

#### New leader chosen for Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, (TTP) has elected Mullah Fazlullah as the successor of Hakimullah Mehsud who was killed in a US drone strike (cf. BN of 4 November 2013). Mullah Fazlullah is considered to be a hardliner who refuses to negotiate with the Pakistani government. He is being held responsible for public floggings and executions and for burning down schools in the Swat Valley. Fazlullah reportedly master-minded the attempt to kill the young girl Malala Yousafzai in Swat who is an advocate of women's rights.

#### Suicide bombings in October

In October 2013, 122 attacks classified as terrorist acts were carried out according to the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), killing 135 people (50 percent fewer than in September) and injuring 326. Most of the attacks were carried out in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtoonkwa, Balochistan, Sindh (Karachi) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

### Iraq

According to a number of reports, between 39 and 56 people were killed in suicide bombings in Baquba, Mosul, Al-Riad near Kirkuk and Tikrit on 4 November 2013. Between 56 and 117 people were reportedly wounded. Police stations have been the target of several attacks and bombings.

On 5 November 2013, a total of 20 to 29 persons were killed, 28 were reportedly wounded.

On 6 November 2013, at least 22 persons were killed in suicide bombings in Baghdad, Mosul, Baiji, Ramadi, Kirkuk and Tikrit, at least 68 people were wounded.

Between 33 and 58 people were killed in suicide bombings in Balad, Mosul, Baghdad and Karbala on 7 November 2013.

At least 25 people were killed in Mosul, Baghdad, Falluja and Sulaimaniya on 8 November 2013.

On 9 November 2012, at least eight people were killed in suicide bombings in Baghdad, Nassiriya and Baquba.

According to a number of reports, between seven and 20 people were killed in suicide bombings in Mosul, Baghdad, Samawa, Falluja and Balad on 10 November 2013.

Violence has spiked in Iraq in 2013. According to Iraq Body Count, 7,500 civilians have been killed (as at: 10 November 2013). Compared to the previous year, the total number of civilians killed in October 2012 was 4,574.

### **Date set for parliamentary elections**

Parliamentary elections have been scheduled for 30 April 2014.

### **Technisches Hilfswerk in the autonomous region of Kurdistan**

According to a press release issued on 6 November 2013, Technische Hilfswerk (Federal Agency for Technical Relief) is on site in the autonomous region of Kurdistan to assist with the construction and establishment of refugee camps for Syrian refugees. The tasks include developing waste water systems, enhancing the water supply, building schools in containers and delivering training for repair teams in the refugee camps.

## **Iran**

### **Political prisoners go on hunger strike**

According to several human rights organisations, more than 80 political prisoners have gone on hunger strike. One of them is the human rights lawyer Abdolfattah Soltani. The prisoners are protesting at being denied proper medical care. The strikers are denouncing security service interference during prisoner transfers to hospitals and the refusal of the authorities to meet costly medical bills. More than two dozen prisoners of conscience have died as a result of extensive neglect under highly dubious conditions in Iranian prisons in the past few years, according to Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Laureate. In a statement, she joined a number of human rights organisations in calling on the international community to express its concern at the plight of political prisoners by voting for a UN resolution. Special human rights monitor for Iran Ahmed Shaheed also criticised the fact that there has been no sign of improvement in the human rights situation despite promises made by President Royhani.

## **Yemen**

### **Shia attack on Salafist stronghold**

Last week, clashes broke out in the north of Yemen between Houthi militia and Salafi groups in which hundreds of people were killed according to local media reports. The Houthis who belong to the Shia religious community of the Zaida have besieged and opened fire on a Salif religious school in Dammaj, just a few kilometres from the provincial capital of Saada. Any attempts to broker a ceasefire have failed up to now.

## **Israel/Palestinian Autonomous Territories**

### **Peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians fail**

The Palestinians have refused to continue with peace talks with Israel unless they stop building Jewish settler homes immediately. This was announced by a high-ranking representative of the Palestinians on 5 November 2013 following a controversial round of talks with Israeli negotiators. He said the talks failed because the Israelis were determined to continue building Jewish settler homes. Israel had announced following the release of 26 Palestinian prisoners that it would build hundreds of new settler homes in East Jerusalem (cf. BN of 4 November 2013). Indiscretions by the Israelis indicated how contradictory the viewpoints of both negotiating partners are. The state-owned broadcasting corporation and the daily newspapers "Maariv" and "Yedioth Acharonot" all reported that Israel had proposed making the Israeli blockades the starting point of the peace talks rather than the borders of 1967. This would reduce the size of the Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

## **Syria**

### **National Coalition does not rule out participation in forthcoming peace conference**

The Syrian National Coalition which is opposed to Syrian President Bashar Assad says it will take part in the peace conference for Syria if its conditions are met. The peace conference was originally scheduled for 23/24 November 2013 and may now take place in December. The National Coalition demanded a guarantee on 11 November 2013 that relief organisations would gain access to besieged areas and that prisoners would be released, especially women and children. It said the conference must lead to political change. Participation in the conference is controversial among members of the Syrian opposition NS many Islamist groups have refused to participate. The Syrian government has already said it will participate in the peace conference.

### **UN launches vaccination campaign**

The UN has launched a large-scale vaccination campaign following the outbreak of polio in Syria and six other countries in the region. The World Health Organisation and UNICEF announced in Geneva on 8 November 2013 that 650,000 children have already been vaccinated against poliomyelitis. The vaccination is to be administered to a total of 20 million children.

## **Côte d'Ivoire**

### **Ex-President remains in prison**

Laurent Gbagbo, former President of Côte d'Ivoire who has been detained in The Hague for the past two years pending trial before the International Criminal Court is not to be released for the time being. His appeal was rejected on 5 November 2013. Gbagbo has been accused of committing crimes against humanity, including rape and murder. No date has been set for his trial. The Court is currently examining the charges. The 68-year-old is the first former head of state to be detained by the International Criminal Court. He was defeated by his opponent Alassane Outtara in the presidential elections of 2010 but refused to stand down. Around 3,000 persons were reportedly killed in the clashes that erupted between the supporters of both candidates after the elections,

## **Eritrea**

### **New wave of arrests of Christians**

Eritrean authorities have continued to crack down on Christians with a new wave of arrests. Seventy supporters of the Living God Church were reportedly arrested during a prayer service in the North of the capital Asmara and were brought to a police station in Edaga Hamus. According to the Christian relief organisation Open Doors, the number of Christians detained since the beginning of the year has risen to around 300. It is believed that 1,500 men and women are being detained on religious grounds throughout the country in police stations, military compounds and ship containers without any official charges or trial - some of them for years. Several prisoners died in detention as a result of mistreatment and poor care. Open Doors says 25 persons have died in 2013 alone. Medical treatment is frequently refused.

In May 2002, President Issayas Afwerki declared all churches illegal. The government only recognises the Eritrean-Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and Islam. Since then, the government has issued arrests, has ordered churches to be closed down and has banned private gatherings. The crackdown has affected Jehovah Witnesses, Pentecostal and Evangelical minority churches and Muslim Wahhabi in particular.

## **Somalia**

### **Car bomb attack in Mogadishu**

Five people were killed and 26 were wounded when a car bomb exploded in front of a hotel in Mogadishu on 8 November 2013. Two police officers, two civilians and one MP were reportedly among the dead. A government representative said the attack had all the hallmarks of the al-Shabab militia. The terrorists also tried to detonate an explosive device in the popular Maka-Almukarma Hotel in Hodan district but it failed, a police spokesperson said.

## **Democratic Republic of Congo**

### **M23 rebellion ends after 20 months**

M23 President Bertrand Bisimwa has declared an end to the armed rebellion. Just a few hours before, in the early hours of 5 November 2013, the last remaining M23 rebels were driven from their strongholds Tshanzu and Runyonyi in the mountains close to the border with Uganda and Rwanda by government troops with military backing from the United Nations forces. Bisimwa said the group would pursue its goals through political means. Bisimwa requested rebel commanders to prepare fighters for disarmament, demobilization and social reintegration. A smaller number has surrendered to Congolese government troops. 1,500 rebels, including the M23 Commander Sultani Makenga fled to Uganda where they surrendered, according to a statement issued by Ugandan Army sources on 7 November 2013. On 11 November 2013, M23 leaders and the Congolese government will sign a peace agreement in Kampala/Uganda.

Around 50 armed groups are active in East Congo. Congolese government spokesman Lambert Mende announced on 5 November 2013 that the next step would be to disarm the rebel organisation, the Rwandan Hutu militia FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda), which is the second strongest rebel organisation. The UN special envoy for the Great Lakes region, Mary Robinson, said words to the same effect on 10 November 2013.

## **Nigeria**

### **Seven killed in clashes with Boko Haram in Kano**

Five members of the Nigerian Islamist sect Boko Haram and two soldiers were killed in gun battles in Kano on 9 November 2013 when a military task force stormed two buildings suspected of being Boko Haram safe houses in the Hotoro Dan Marke and Brigade areas of the city (which has the same name as the capital of the North Nigerian federal state). The last known violence linked to Boko Haram in Kano was a bomb blast in Nigeria's second-largest city in July 2013.

## **Kosovo**

### **Re-elections at three polling stations in North Kosovo**

Re-elections are to take place at three polling stations in Mitrovica on 17 November 2013 following heavy riots and the premature termination of local voting at several polling districts (cf. BN of 4 November 2013).

## **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

### **Lack of hope among a shrinking population**

The first census to be held since 1991 was held in October 2013. The official results will be published in January 2014. According to preliminary statistics, the population has shrunk from 4.4 million to 3.79 million (-13 %).

According to a recent study conducted by the United Nations, around half the population are disillusioned and embittered and have little or no hope of their situation improving in the year to come. One-tenth actually expect the situation to deteriorate. The country has the highest unemployment rate in Europe at 42 percent.

## **Russian Federation**

### **Thousands protest in Moscow against foreigners and Muslims**

Fewer people took part in the "Russian March" of ultra-nationalists held on 4 November 2013 than originally indicated by the organisers. According to the news agency AFP, around 10,000 people took to the streets to protest against migrants. Holding up banners proclaiming "Today, a mosque — tomorrow, jihad" and "Young people against tolerance", those marching were protesting primarily against Muslim migrants. Nationalists also took to the streets in St. Petersburg, Kasan and Irkutsk to protest against foreigners. However, there were no riots like those that occurred during the March in previous years. Around 30 young men were detained for administrative offences and using Nazi-style salutes and symbols.

### **Background:**

Ethnic tensions have simmered in Russia with a steady inflow of labourers from crisis-hit regions of the former Soviet Union in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Nationalists are blaming migrants for the high rate of crime and for taking jobs away from Russian nationals. Migrants tend to work in construction or in other poorly-paid industries in larger cities where Russians rarely work. According to statistics, Russia has an immigrant population of around 11 million. The majority of migrants are residing lawfully in Russia.

## **Tajikistan**

### **Presidential elections: Incumbent wins**

Incumbent President Emomalii Rahmon was re-elected at the presidential elections on 6 November 2013 garnering a reported 84% of the vote. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said the elections did not meet democratic standards. There were no genuine contenders as the five candidates are considered to be loyal to the President. The only real opposition candidate was prevented from running.

## **Bangladesh**

### **150 border guards receive the death penalty**

A special court in Dhaka sentenced 150 soldiers to death on 5 November 2013 and over 350 were sentenced to many years in jail. The soldiers were members of the border guard unit Bangladesh Rifles who revolted in a fight for wages and working conditions in 2009. More than 70 people died in the conflict, including 57 high-ranking army officers. The human rights organisation Human Rights Watch said it had doubts that the trials were fair since the defendants have had limited access to lawyers. Defendants were also reportedly tortured.

## **North Korea**

### **80 prisoners executed in North Korea**

The North Korean regime has reportedly had 80 people publicly executed for possession of banned TV series and engaging in prostitution.