

Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

11 July 2016

Abridged version due to staffing situation!

Afghanistan

Security situation

The fighting, attacks and ambushes continue. The affected provinces were Nangarhar, Ghazni, Kandahar, Takhar, Helmand, Paktia, Badakhshan.

Attacks

A commander of Jamiat-i-Islami, an Islamist party dominated by ethnic Tajiks, became the victim of a suicide bombing in Sar-i-Pul (north) on 06 July 2016. The commander was injured and four men in his company died. A religious scholar was killed by a bomb attached to his vehicle in Nangarhar (east). On 05 July 2016 four children died when a mine hidden near a road exploded, two more suffered injuries on 05 July 2016.

Iraq

Interior Ministers resigns after attack

Two days after the attack in Baghdad's Karrada district on 03 July 2016, for which the death toll has meanwhile risen to 281 (see BN of 04.07.16), Iraqi Interior Minister Mohammed al-Ghabban resigned. His resignation also comes in reaction to the populations increasing anger at the government and is a protest against the flaws of the security system. The assassin had succeeded in entering the capital, apparently without any problems, coming all the way from Diyala province with a huge truck filled with explosives. As a result of the latest attacks President al-Abadi wants to restructure the security authorities. He accepted al-Ghabban's resignation on 08 July 2016 a few hours after he had already dismissed the most senior heads of the security agencies and the secret service in Baghdad. He wants the new interior minister to get the recent escalation of violence under control and to prevent further terrorist attacks.

Bombing of Shia shrine

At least 50 people died in the bombing of a Shia shrine north of Baghdad on 07 July 2016. 94 were reported wounded. IS claimed responsibility for the attack.

Airbase conquered

The Iraqi army reports that it won back the strategically important Kajjarah air force base (60 kilometres south of Mosul) from IS in its advance on Mosul.

Syria

Fighting for Aleppo continues despite unilateral ceasefire

The military's unilateral ceasefire for the end of Ramadan from 06 to 11 July 2016 did not bring any lasting calm. Heavy fighting for the city of Aleppo resumed. On 07 July 2016 government forces cut the rebel's last supply route. The rebels in turn responded with a counter offensive in the night of 09 July 2016 firing missiles on government quarters in the city and killing 44 people.

Air strikes of Darkush

23 people were killed in air raids on the city of Darkush in Idleb province. It is unclear whether Russian or Syrian fighter jets flew the air strikes.

IS downed Russian helicopter

Two Russian pilots lost their lives when their military helicopter was shot down by IS near the city of Palmyra (Homs province) on 08 July 2016.

Turkey/Syria

Turkey intends to naturalize up to 300,000 Syrian refugees

The media reported Turkey's intention to offer Turkish citizenship to up to 300,000 Syrian refugees. The naturalization shall take place in several phases, the first invitation will go to 30,000 – 40,000 Syrians, allegedly mainly such who are well educated; at a later stage the members of their family shall also be eligible for naturalization. The Turkish secret service will perform a security screening to identify and exclude terrorists.

Yemen

Double assault of military base

In a double assault on a military base in the country's south at least six soldiers and 20 of the attackers died on 06 July 2016. Nobody has as yet claimed responsibility for the attack; IS had previously directed attacks of this kind against Yemeni security forces.

Saudi Arabia

Several casualties in bombings

Several people died in a series of attacks in three cities. One of these suicide bombings happened in the night of 04 July 2016 near the US consulate in Jeddah, another suicide bomber blew himself up near the mosque of the prophet in Medina in the evening of 04 July 2016. A number of explosions occurred in the city of Qatif in the country's east which is a Shia stronghold within the predominantly Sunni Gulf country. In addition to the bomber four people died in the Medina attack and three in Qatif. Nobody has as yet claimed responsibility for the attacks. IS had called upon his followers to stage attacks during the fasting month.

Libya

Soldiers die in car bomb attack

In the city of Benghazi twelve soldiers of the units fighting against Islamist extremists in Libya's east, died in the explosion of a car bomb on 07 July 2016.

Mali

German soldiers under gunfire during patrol

For the first time since the German Federal Army's deployment as part of the UN peace mission German soldiers of MINUSMA (Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) drew gunfire during a reconnaissance mission. The incident involving hand-held weapons occurred on 06 July 2016 during a stop north of Gao. The command issued a press release stating that the patrol avoided the fire and returned to Gao (Camp Castor). None of the soldiers on patrol were hurt. The Federal Army suspects that the attack was launched by the terror group Ansar Dine.

Reportedly also French soldiers accompanying a UN convoy about 100 km north of Gao, were attacked on the same day.

MINUSMA is considered to be particularly dangerous. During this mission 68 UN soldiers were killed by explosives or terrorist attacks between July 2013 and 31 May 16. In the first half of 2016 alone 24 UN soldiers died in assaults, almost half of them in May and June.

Nigeria

Boko Haram suicide bombings

In the early morning of 08 July 2016 a suicide bomber tried to enter the central mosque of the city of Damboa (Borno state in the north-east). After security forces stopped him from entering, he blew himself up near the mosque. A second suicide bomber succeeded in entering a smaller mosque in the city and exploded his bomb there, killing himself and six of the faithful.

Fighters that are suspected to belong to Boko Haram attacked the village of Gaskeri near Borno's capital Maiduguri in the night to 07 July 2016. They murdered three members of the local vigilante group and stole food.

Zimbabwe

Unrest, protest and strike

On 04 July 2016 drivers of taxis and vans protested against police blackmail and harassment in the capital Harare. For the first time in more than ten years this caused clashes with the police in several townships. The police used tear gas, water canons and warning shots against the protesters. 95 people were arrested. On 05 July 2016 teachers, doctors and nurses went on strike, because their salaries had not been paid by the government. In his Twitter campaign #ThisFlag the priest Evan Mawarire called upon the population to stay at home on 06 July 2016 in protest against the economic crisis. Most of the inhabitants of Harare and the second largest city Bulawayo followed this appeal. The police informed that during the day of protest about 40 people were arrested nationwide for blocking the roads and "disturbing the peace".

Western Balkans

Paris Western Balkans conference – integration of Balkans difficult

The third conference for the countries of the Western Balkans was held on 04 July 2016 in Paris. The conference was attended by the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) and by Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Germany and France plus the European Commission. The debate centred on the refugee crisis, security issues and the region's economic development. The main message of the summit was the confirmation that all western Balkans countries still have a EU perspective, including after the British referendum. To underline the EU perspective and support the process of reforms about 400m € will be provided for regional development projects. A project was adopted that shall allow young people from six countries to stay in the EU for studies for a few months.

All EU members generally agree that the integration of the Western Balkans into the EU shall make further progress, if only for strategic reasons with special regard to the crisis in Ukraine and the tense relations to Russia. Although all countries of the Balkans are still willing to join the EU, the scepticism of their citizens against the EU is growing. Russia is attempting to re-affirm its influence in the region. After the Brexit vote it offered membership in the Eurasian Economic Union to the Balkan countries.

Bangladesh

Assault on police station

On 07 July 2016 several persons attacked a police station in Kishoreganj north of Dhaka with home-made explosives and stabbing weapons. Panic broke out during the attack at a prayer meeting that was held near the police station at the same time. Four people, including two policemen, a woman and one of the attackers, died.

India/Pakistan

Casualties in pro-Pakistan protest in Indian Kashmir

Massive unrest broke out during protests in the Indian part of Kashmir on 09 July 2016. At least 16 people died, over 200 – including about 100 security forces – were wounded. The unrest was triggered by the killing of the rebel leader Burhan Mzaffar Wani and two of his comrades by Indian soldiers on the day before. Wani was one of the leaders of the Islamist group Hizbul Mujahideen (Party of the Holy Warriors) which is widely regarded as a terrorist organization, including by the EU.

The decades-old conflict in Kashmir has intensified recently. Militant groups are fighting for Kashmir's separation from India. India accuses Pakistan of providing material and ideological support to these groups. Although Pakistan denies this, it considers them freedom fighters. India and Pakistan have already fought two wars over this region. It is estimated that about 44,000 people died in unrest and fighting in the Indian part of Kashmir since the early eighties.

Pakistan

Number of 'honorary killings' on the rise

The independent Pakistani Human Rights Commission announced that last year 1,096 women and 88 men have died in so-called honorary killings. In 2014 1,005 women, including 82 children were killed. In 2013 there were 869 female victims. The actual number of victims of such murders is probably much higher, because most of them never become known.