

Group 22 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

5 December 2016

Afghanistan

Armed clashes

Hostilities, raids and attacks, some involving fatalities or injuries among the civilian population, continue to occur. According to press reports, the following provinces were affected in recent weeks: Nangarhar, Paktika, Ghazni, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Zabul, Daikundi, Badghis, Herat, Farah, Faryab, Kunduz, Helmand, Badakhshan, Maidan Wardak. Heavy fighting is expected in the province of Sar-i-Pul in the coming days. A growing presence of Taliban and IS fighters has been observed around the capital, Sar-i-Pul City.

Targeted attacks

It was reported from the south-eastern province of Paktika on 28.11.16 that the Taliban had set up controls on highways.

Two rockets landed in Kabul's diplomatic district on 30.11.16.

On 03.12.16 the Taliban executed a student in Maidan Wardak (Central Afghanistan). He was accused of spying for the government and being involved in the murder of a commander of the Haqqani network. Three civilians died and three were injured when a roadside bomb blew up in Paktika (South-East Afghanistan).

On 04.12.16 the Taliban began confiscating smartphones on which music or videos were stored in the district of Qarah Bagh in Ghazni province (South-East Afghanistan).

Iraq

The situation in Mosul

IS fighters have inflicted serious losses on the Shiite militia in counter-attacks in Mosul over the past few days, causing the anti-IS coalition's advance to falter. The situation for the civilians trapped in Mosul is growing increasingly perilous. It is reported that neither food nor fuel have reached the city for a week now.

Palestinian territories

Abbas argues for further dialogue with Israel at Fatah congress

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, has pushed for a continuation of the dialogue with Israel at the Al-Fatah party congress. He made his stand in front of around 1,400 delegates on 30.11.16. The president said that the Palestinians wanted peace in accordance with the international resolutions, but the Israeli government evidently did not want this. He insisted that Israel must accept that the settlements are illegal.

Iran

Dogfighting over succession to Khamenei

The conflict between the judiciary and the legislature in Iran began with a question in parliament: Parliamentarian Mahmoud Sadeghi demanded information after it had emerged that all accounts of the judiciary run under the name of the head of the judiciary, Sadegh Larijani, and that bail payments were also transferred directly to these accounts, for example. The minister for economic affairs, Ali Tayebnia, confirmed the allegations. Judicial officers duly intended to arrest Sadeghi. Sadeghi claimed parliamentary immunity, however. Larijani is regarded as a potential successor to religious leader Ali Khamenei. The attacks on the judiciary could weaken his prospects.

Kuwait

Islamists and their allies celebrate return to parliament

Opposition candidates have claimed more than half of the seats in the early parliamentary election. The election authorities announced on 04.12.16 that they had secured 24 of the total of 50 mandates. Around half of the newly elected opposition MPs come from Islamist movements, while the remainder are nationalists and liberals. One woman managed to enter the national assembly. The Shiite minority lost three seats, leaving it with six MPs. The turn-out for the election on 03.12.16 stood at around 70 %. The opposition boycotted the elections in 2012 and 2013 on account of continuing disputes over electoral law.

Libya

Hundreds of migrants rescued from the Mediterranean

Some 1400 refugees were reportedly rescued from the Mediterranean off the coast of Libya on 28.11.16. The Italian authorities report that more than 171,000 people were rescued from the Mediterranean and taken to Italy in the first eleven months of the year. The previous record stood at 170,000 in 2014. At least 4,690 men, women and children are said to have died on the dangerous crossing since the beginning of the year.

Death of Islamist leader reported

A US government representative reported on 28.11.16 that Islamist leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar was killed in a French air raid in November 2016. The raid was carried out in cooperation with the US secret service. There had been numerous reports of his death in the past. Belmokhtar was involved in numerous attacks in the Sahel zone.

Fighting in Tripoli

Fighting is reported to have broken out between mutually opposed militia in the south of the capital on the evening of 01.12.16. Tanks, trucks and heavy arms were reportedly seen on roads and explosions and gunfire were to be heard. According to media reports, the fighting was between - on the one side militia of former prime minister Khalifa Al-Ghweil, supported by forces of Grand Mufti Sadik Al-Ghariani and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, a terrorist militia with links to Al Qaeda - and on the other side Haitham Tajouri's Revolutionary Brigades, Abdul Rauf Kara's Rada Formation and local warlords. At least seven people are said to have been killed.

Egypt

New NGO law

On 29.11.16 the parliament passed a law which it is feared may hinder the independent work of foreign non-government organisations in future. Under the law, a new authority is to monitor all foreign NGOs as well as Egyptian bodies with foreign funding. Work of a political nature is to be prohibited in future. Results of fieldwork or opinion polls must be approved prior to publication. The work of NGOs has already been hampered to date. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation has been restricted in its work since a ruling against two of its staff in 2013, for example. The Friedrich Naumann Foundation was forced to leave Egypt at the beginning of 2016. President Al-Sisi has yet to sign off the new law.

More severe sentences for FGM

A law stipulating sterner sentences for female genital mutilation entered into force on 01.12.16. The practice of FGM is now punishable with a prison sentence of between five and seven years, as compared to the term of between three months and two years which has applied to date. A prison sentence of 15 years is possible in cases in which the victim is permanently disabled or dies.

Female genital mutilation is widespread among Egypt's Muslim and Christian populations alike. According to UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), the attitude towards this practice is changing. While 92 % of all mothers have undergone FGM, only 35 % intend to have it carried out on their daughters. In January 2015 a doctor who had carried out FGM on a 14-year old girl who died as a result was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for manslaughter and to three months' imprisonment for practising FGM. He was only required to serve the three-month prison term.

South Sudan

Human rights commission: Ethnic cleansing

On 01.12.16 a UN human rights commission stated with regard to the situation in South Sudan that starvation, burning-down villages and driving out the population are being applied as means of ethnic cleansing. The report notes that sexual violence against female civilians by all armed groups involved in the civil war has reached unimaginable proportions. In the course of its ten-day stay in the country, the three-strong UN commission visited the federal states of Unity, Upper Nile, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Central Equatoria and Eastern Equatoria.

It is estimated that 2.2 million South Sudanese have been driven from their homes since the conflict between president Salva Kiir and his former vice-president broke out in December 2013.

Somalia

Hostilities

Fighting broke out in the area of the town of Dumaye (Mudug region) on 27. and 28.11.16 between members of a local militia supported by Galmudug's security forces and Al-Sabaab fighters. At least 20 people died in the fighting. The majority of the dead are believed to be Al-Shabaab fighters. The fighting broke out after the local population refused to pay taxes to Al-Shabaab.

Several Al-Shabaab fighters were killed in an air raid on a training camp of the extremist militia in Torotorow (Lower Shabelle region) on 28.11.16.

A gun battle between Puntland units and IS fighters occurred for the first time near to the town of Bashashin, some 50 km west of Qandala (Bari region). IS fighters seized the port of Qandala without a fight on 26.10.16. The population is reported to have fled. According to information from the governor of the Bari region, who is directing the offensive against Qandala's occupiers, the Puntland security forces came under attack when they were defusing land mines which the IS fighters had laid to hinder their advance. Seven extremists were killed and three Puntland soldiers were injured in the gun battle.

Members of Al-Shabaab broke with the militia in October 2015 and swore allegiance to IS. While IS came under attack from Al-Shabaab in south Somalia, it managed to establish itself in the remote Galgala mountains in Puntland. According to information from the governor of Bari, the killed IS fighters were all Somalis.

Attacks

Unknown attackers shot dead an elder in the Mogadishu district of Yaqshid on 29.11.16. Two members of the security forces and one bodyguard were killed in an Al-Shabaab ambush on a convoy of local dignitaries in the area of El Baraf (Middle Shabelle region) on 01.12.16. The district commander of Jalalaqsi was injured.

Ethiopia/Eritrea

Ethiopia accuses Eritrea of attempted attack

According to reports in various media, Ethiopian authorities claim to have prevented a terrorist attack supported by Eritrea, killing 15 Eritrean soldiers and arresting 73. 113 armed men allegedly attempted to cross the Eritrean/Ethiopian border in the west of the Tigray region. Satellite telephones, money, weapons and other items of military equipment are claimed to have been seized. The Ethiopian defence ministry alleges that the men concerned were members of Ginbot 7.

Ginbot 7 (G-7 - corresponds to "15th of May") was established in May 2008. Its aim is for a changeover of power in Ethiopia. As this cannot be achieved through elections, any means that justify this end are considered legitimate in the fight against the government. Consequently, Ginbot 7 was declared a terrorist organisation in June 2011 under the 2009 anti-terrorism act.

Ethiopia and Eritrea have repeatedly accused one another of providing terrorist organisations with financial and logistical support in order to destabilise their respective neighbouring countries. The two countries were involved in a border war from 1998 to 2000, since when armed clashes have been a frequent occurrence, most recently in April.

Nigeria

Court orders release of sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky

In response to a petition by sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, leader of the Shiite sect Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), on 02.12.16 the Federal High Court in Abuja ordered his unconditional release from prison within 45 days, together with his wife, Malama Zeatudden. The court furthermore ordered the federal government to provide El-Zakzaky with a new home in the city of Zaria (headquarters of the IMN in the northern federal state of Kaduna) or another town of his choice in northern Nigeria and to pay compensation for wrongful imprisonment of 50 million naira (around 150,000 euros) to him and his wife.

El-Zakzaky and his wife were arrested during the violent clashes between IMN members and the military in Zaria from 12. to 14.12.15 and have since been detained by the SSS domestic intelligence service. According to an inquiry report by the government of Kaduna, almost 350 civilians, for the most part IMN members, died in the disturbances as a result of the disproportionate use of force by the army. El-Zakzaky's estate was destroyed. Since 2015, numerous people have been shot dead by security forces at various IMN processions, some of which were illegal. Human Rights Watch estimates that the sect has around three million members in Nigeria.

DR Congo

Central Congo: Kamwina Nsapu militia attacks provincial capital Tshikapa

On 03.12.16 fighters suspected of belonging to the Kamwina Nsapu militia attacked the city of Tshikapa (population approx. 600,000), capital of Kasai Occidental province in Central Congo. According to eye-

witness reports, they seized control of around 80 per cent of the city. Only after military units were flown in from the capital, Kinshasa, were the attackers forced back by the morning of 04.12.16. More than 200 people are reported to have died in the heavy fighting. Kamwina Nsapu, who established the militia in the summer of 2016, was killed in fighting between the militia and the police in August 2016. The militia rose up after the authorities presented his castrated dead body to the population in Kananga (capital of Kasai Central province). Its fighters briefly gained control of Kananga airport in September 2016, for example, and security forces had to be flown in in order to drive them out.

Mali

Attacks on airports in the north

Extremists have attacked two airports in the north of Mali. The security forces stated on 30.11.16 that there were no casualties. Offices of the UN peace-keeping force near to the airport in Gao were destroyed by a car bomb explosion on 29.11.16. The Al-Mourabitoun group, which is allied with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, used the internet to claim responsibility for the attack. The other incident concerned a rocket attack on Timbuktu airport. The rockets reportedly came down outside of the airport grounds, without causing any damage.

Gambia

Presidential elections

On 01.12.16 around 900,000 of Gambia's population of just under two million were called upon to cast their votes. The winner of the presidential election is opposition candidate Adama Barrow (United Democratic Party/UDP). The election commission announced in the capital, Banjul, on 02.12.16 that he had amassed 45.5 % of votes cast. Head of state Yahya Jammeh (Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction / APRC) claimed 36.6 % of the vote, while the third candidate, Mama Kandeh, amassed 17.8 %. The turnout stood at 65 %. In Barrow, the opposition had fielded a joint candidate for the first time. According to the election commission, Jammeh, who seized power in a coup in the summer of 1994, accepted defeat before the official result was actually announced. The change of government is planned for January 2017. This would be the first peaceful changeover of power since the country attained independence in 1965. Ahead of the elections, incumbent president Jammeh had banned demonstrations and shut down international telephone links and the internet, officially in order to avoid unrest. In 2015 Jammeh declared Gambia an Islamic republic and announced the introduction of sharia law. In October 2016 Jammeh withdrew Gambia from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. Barrow, who has announced plans for an independent judiciary, freedom of the press, a transparent administration and the release of political prisoners, is expected to revoke these measures.

Serbia

Germany supporting Romany projects

The federal German government is supporting a programme to improve educational and integration opportunities for Romanies in Serbia with the aim of combating reasons for migrants fleeing the country. The KfW reconstruction loan corporation has donated 2.4 million euros to the Roma Education Fund. 1,000 young Romanies are to receive a three-year grant for secondary school. Work experience placements are to

be made available for 50 pupils annually and 25 school-leavers are to receive career development courses. Each year, 100 families returning to Serbia are also to receive support with reintegration into the Serbian education system. In a second phase, a further 3 million euros are to be provided for other measures.

Russian Federation/North Caucasus

Security service inflicts blow on IS

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) has announced that it killed 35-year old high-ranking IS jihadist Rustam Aselderov and four of his fellow combatants in a raid in Makhachkala (capital of the Russian North Caucasian Republic of Dagestan) on 03.12.16.

Aselderov, who was also known under the fighting name Sheikh Abu Mohammed al-Kadari, is alleged to have sworn allegiance to the IS jihadi militia in December 2014 and most recently to have been its "emir" in North Caucasus. He had previously fought for a group of insurgents in North Caucasus and, according to information from the FSB, was involved in various attacks, including one in Volgograd in 2013 in which 34 people were killed.

Belarus

Death penalty enforced once again

According to information from the human rights organisation Viasna, Belarus has enforced a death sentence for the third time in 2016. A 31-year old who had been sentenced to death for three murders in February 2016 was shot dead.

Belarus is the last country in Europe to enforce the death penalty. More than 400 people have been executed since 1991. For the most part, dependants are not informed as to when or where the execution is to take place. Neither are they notified as to where the corpse has been buried. Politicians and organisations throughout the world regularly call for executions to be suspended for the time being at least.

China

Wife of an imprisoned lawyer receives human rights award

Wang Qiaoling, the wife of imprisoned Chinese civil rights lawyer Li Heping, is among the 16 recipients of the Franco-German Human Rights Award, which was presented for the first time on 01.12.16. Wang received the award for her untiring commitment and her role as a spokesperson for the relatives of imprisoned Chinese lawyers and activists. Li was arrested in a broad clampdown on activists, human rights lawyers and their staff in July 2015. He is charged with subverting the authority of the state.

Myanmar/Bangladesh

Thousands of Rohingya flee to Bangladesh

According to a UNHCR estimate released on 30.11.16, around 10,000 Rohingya have fled into neighbouring Bangladesh in the face of the violence which broke out on 09.10.16 (see BN of 10.10.16). The UNHCR notes that the figure may be significantly higher, as the situation is altering quickly. The Bangladesh authorities announced that they were allowing a number of injured refugees into the country on humanitarian

grounds. They had previously closed off the border. Muslims have recently protested in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand against the alleged persecution of Rohingya in Myanmar.

India/Pakistan

Kashmir: Ten killed in attack on Indian military camp

Seven soldiers and three attackers were killed in an attack on an Indian military camp in Nagrota in the troubled Kashmir region on 30.11.16. The heavily armed attackers threw hand grenades. They then shot dead four members of the security forces and forced their way into two buildings in which police offices were living with their families and soldiers. The battle lasted around eight hours.

A similar incident occurred most recently in September 2016, claiming the lives of 19 soldiers. This was the most serious attack on the Indian military since 2002 (see BN of 19.09.16).

There has recently been a marked rise in tension between India and Pakistan. The military on both sides regularly report artillery fire and exchanges of fire at the border, with military and civilian fatalities on both sides. India reports a marked rise in the number of terrorists attempting to cross the border from Kashmir into India.

Columbia

Parliament adopts peace agreement

On 29.11.16 the senate voted in favour of the peace treaty with the rebel organisation Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) which was signed on 24.11.16 (cf. BN of 28.11.16), and on 30.11.16 it was adopted by the congress. In each instance there were no votes against the treaty; opponents to the treaty - MPs belonging to Alvaro Uribe's Centro Democrático party - boycotted both votes. This means that the conflict which has been going on since 1964 has now officially ended. The roughly 5,800 FARC fighters are to begin handing in their weapons before the year is out, with the process to be completed within six months.

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