

Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

07 July 2014

Afghanistan

Security situation

Four civilians, one soldier and one policeman were wounded in a bomb explosion at a market place in Maiwand district, Kandahar province, on 06 July 2014. The policeman later succumbed to his injuries.

In the night to 05 July 2014 a large number of parked, petrol-filled road tankers exploded under missile fire near Kabul. Sources vary regarding the number of lorries that were involved, it ranges between several dozen and up to 400. It seems that there were no personal injuries. A Taliban spokesman said that the foreign forces' vehicles had been destroyed for tactical reasons.

The Afghan Defence Ministry reported that eight air force soldiers and the assassin died in the first suicide bombing since the beginning of the month of fasting on 02 July 2014. 16 people, including some civilians, were injured. The suicide bomber detonated the explosive next to a military bus in a high security area near the university.

Eleven Taliban fighters were killed in an attack of Afghan combat helicopters in Jurm district, Badakhshan province.

Pakistan

Security situation

After a two-week air offensive against extremist strongholds in North Waziristan the Pakistani military started a ground offensive on 30 June 2014. According to army sources 376 terrorists and 17 soldiers were killed and 61 terror bases destroyed since the operation's start on 15 June 2014. It is said that 19 terrorists gave themselves up to the security forces.

Charges for stoning a pregnant woman

As of 07 July 2014 five men who stoned a pregnant woman in front of a courthouse in Lahore in May of this year must stand trial. The father, two brothers, a cousin, and the divorced husband of the victim are charged with "murder, torture, and terrorism". It is said that police officers, lawyers and others were standing by watching the stoning without interfering. The victim intended to testify in court in favour of her current husband in proceedings against him. Her family had accused her current husband of kidnapping her and forcing her to marry him.

Syria

"Islamic State" strengthens power base in Syria

The terror group "Islamic State" as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) or ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) as it has been designating itself recently, took the important oil field of Omar near Deir ez-Zor which had been conquered by the al-Nusra Front together with other Islamist militias after battles with the Syrian Army in November of 2013. Thus the militia is controlling a region in northern and eastern Syria that stretches from the Iraqi border (the town of Abu Kamal) to the Turkish border and to the north-eastern outskirts of the city of Aleppo and is five times as large as the neighbouring state of Lebanon.

Iraq

Evolution of the situation

The situation in Iraq remains confusing as armed confrontations and attacks in several Iraqi regions continue unabated.

On 01 July 2014 the UN reported a death toll of over 2,400 in Iraq in 2014. The UN registered 800 deaths in May and 750 in April.

It seems that the Iraqi army was for the first time successful in a large-scale offensive against IS in the night of 29 June to 30 June 2014 in the town of Tikrit. There are reports that the army was able to gain control of areas on the outskirts of town (see BN of 30 June 2014). Fighting was also reported from Baiji where one of the country's major oil refineries is located. The Iraqi Army succeeded in averting an attack on the refinery, allegedly killing twelve IS fighters in the process. On 01 July 2014 20 people died when the Iraqi army clashed with followers of the Shiite cleric al-Sorchi in Kerbala. Iraqi media reported that riots also erupted in the town of Diwanija south of Kerbala and the government imposed a curfew. A Kurdish news agency reported on 05 July 2014 that IS fighters executed ten tribal leaders and senior authorities in the predominantly Kurdish town of Zur Maghar and left them hanging from poles as a deterrent.

Fighting also continues for the city of Mosul that IS had taken in mid-June. Meanwhile Islamic law has been introduced there. There are also reports that the Christians who remained in Mosul have to pay a poll tax. The archbishop of Mosul stated that about 5,000 Christians have fled the city since IS took control. Also hundreds of thousands of Muslims were trying to get out of the region, he said.

Session of parliament ends in chaos

The constituent meeting of the Iraqi parliament elected in April failed on 01 July 2014. The deputies failed to agree on the constitutionally required election of a head of government and adjourned the meeting. Prime Minister al-Maliki is seeking another period in office despite the political crisis and again rejected all calls for his dismissal. Iraq's supreme Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, urged the leading politicians to speed up the formation of the government in view of the advance of IS.

IS Caliphate

On 1 July 2014 IS leader al-Baghdadi disseminated a global audio message to all Muslims after proclaiming the caliphate (see BN of 30 June 2014) inviting them to come to the IS controlled areas and to support the establishment of an Islamic state. The media report that there is another audio message in which IS informs of its plans to extend its domain up to Jerusalem. Reportedly al-Baghdadi presented himself to the public for the first time in a video published by the group on the internet on 04 July 2014. It is said that al-Baghdadi proclaimed himself the "Caliph of all Muslims" in a Friday sermon at al-Nouri Mosque in Mosul and called for "Holy War". The authorities are still examining whether the video is genuine. At the same time IS started to systematically destroy Shiite, Christian, and Sufi Sunni holy sites in Mosul and Ninive province.

Kurds preparing for referendum on independence

According to a statement of the Kurdish President in Northern Iraq, Massud Barsani, the Kurds are planning to hold a referendum on the independence of Northern Iraq in the coming months. Barsani said that Iraq was already de facto divided. Al-Maliki warned the Kurds against establishing their own state, saying that Iraq is a federal and democratic state. He also said that the occupied areas around Kirkuk must come back under central government control. The US, Turkey, and Iran also oppose Kurdish independence.

Obama reinforces troops

Another 200 US soldiers arrived in Baghdad on 29 and 30 June 2014 to warrant the security of the US embassy, its installations, and the international airport. This brings the number of US soldiers up to almost 800. The US also provided drones and combat helicopters to protect the installations and the capital. It is probable that more soldiers will be deployed.

Turkey

Violence against women

The women's association "We Stop Violence Against Women" accused the Turkish government of failing to pass effective laws for the protection of women. Turkish newspapers reported on 04 July 2014 that on one single day three women were shot by their husbands (in Istanbul, Adana, and Izmir). The Turkish internet portal Bianet reports that 129 women were killed by their husbands, relatives, or partners between January and end of June 2014 (as compared to 88 killed in the same period in 2013).

Presidential elections

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is the AKP's official presidential candidate. The two largest opposition parties CHP and MHP have already agreed on 70-year-old Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu as their joint candidate. The election will be held on 10 August 2014.

Palestinian Autonomous Areas

Arrests follow murder of a Palestinian

Israeli security forces reported on 06 July 2014 that six Jewish suspects had been arrested after what was probably a revenge killing of a Palestinian youth who had been found murdered in Jerusalem on 02 July 2014. Initial investigations suggest that he has been burnt alive. A cousin of the murder victim, a US citizen, was reportedly abused by Israeli police. Investigators assume that the Palestinian might have been murdered in revenge for the deaths of three Jewish youths on the West Bank. After the funeral service for the 16-year-old Palestinian heavy rioting between Palestinians and the police broke out again in Israel on 05 July 2014. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu indicated that currently no large-scale military operation in the Palestinian areas is planned, however, the Israeli air force would continue to attack targets in the Gaza Strip in response to the consistent firing of missiles from there (allegedly 30 rockets and mortar shells hit Israeli territory on 04 and 05 July 2014), mainly targeting the missile launching sites and arms factories.

Lebanon

Sunni group intends to attack churches in Lebanon

On 02 July 2014 the Lebanese Interior Minister Nuhad al-Mashnoug announced that the internal security forces will be reinforced from a strength of 30,000 to 40,000 to warrant better protection for the churches and mosques in Lebanon. The announcement came in response to the threat of the Sunni group "Free Sunni of Baalbek Brigade". The group subscribes to the objectives of the Islamist militia IS and announced attacks on churches in Lebanon, in particular in the Eastern Beka'a valley.

Yemen

Heavy fighting resumes after violation of the ceasefire

Following the disruption of the ceasefire between the government troops and the insurgents on 4 July 2014 heavy fighting between Shiite fighters and the military broke out again over the weekend in northern Yemen. 70 insurgents and 34 soldiers lost their lives. On 05 July 2014 the military flew an air attack against positions of the Huthi rebels northwest of the capital of Sana'a. The fighting continued on 05 July 2014 in Amran (Omran) province north of Sana'a. In the southern province of Abjan al Qaeda fighters killed six soldiers. Also separatists are fighting against the central government.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia deploys soldiers on the Iraqi border

The Saudi Arabian state news agency SPA reported that Saudi Arabia had deployed 30,000 soldiers on the border to Iraq. Saudi Arabia and Iraq share about 800 km of border. Although Saudi Arabia considers itself

to be the protector of the Sunni in Syria and supports Sunni rebels in Syria in their fight against Syrian President Assad, the Saudi Arabian leadership denies assisting the Sunni groups in Iraq. The "Islamic State (IS)", formerly ISIS or ISIL, poses a threat for the country just like other radical groups, because in their eyes the Saudi Arabian monarchy is illegal.

Egypt

Two policemen died and several people were injured during an attempt to defuse two bombs hidden near the presidential palace.

The terror group Ansar Beit al-Makdis had announced bomb attacks already on 28 June 2014. Furthermore a new Islamist group Afnad Misr (Soldiers of Egypt) announced that it had hidden bombs near the presidential palace, but not detonated them to spare civilian lives.

Intifada of the Muslim Brotherhood

The followers of President Mursi had proclaimed an Intifada (people's uprising) for 03 July 2014, the anniversary of the ousting of the President. Starting from 35 mosques people were to march in protest in Cairo. The security forces quashed the protests on 03 July 2014. They reported that they fired tear gas and shots against the protesters and arrested more than 200.

Muslim Brotherhood leader sentenced again

A Cairo court sentenced Mohammed Badie and another 37 leading personalities of the Muslim Brotherhood to life imprisonment for incitement to violence during a protest in the summer of 2013. The court also confirmed the death sentences against another ten leading figures of the Muslim Brotherhood most of whom are fugitives, though.

Badie had previously been sentenced to death by a court in the town of Minia in Upper Egypt together with over 180 followers for participating in violent protests and murder. However, these sentences still need to be confirmed by the supreme Islamic legal scholar.

Protests follow drastic increase in petrol prices

To reduce the budget deficit the government decided to cut subsidies for petrol and other goods as of 05 July 2014. President al-Sisi had demanded that the government reduces the budget deficit from twelve to ten percent. Until now state subsidies for food and petrol accounted for about one third of the state budget. After petrol prices soared about 80 percent after the subsidies were scrapped, taxi drivers and other citizens protested against the cuts.

President al-Sisi is striving to increase Egypt's financial independence from the Gulf States. Until now Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates have been supporting Egypt with several billions. They support al-Sisi's policies against the Muslim Brotherhood because they consider Islamists a threat including for their regimes. However, al-Sisi wants to style himself as the author of an economic upswing in the eyes of his countrymen.

Nigeria

Heavy fighting between Boko Haram and the security forces

The military reported that fighters of the Islamist terror organization Boko Haram attacked the military base and police stations in the city of Damboa (administrative seat of the LGA of the same name in the north-eastern state of Borno) in the night of 04 July 2014. 53 of the attackers and six soldiers had died in fighting between Boko Haram and the military it said. These figures could not yet be confirmed by independent sources. It is well known that the Nigerian military tends to understate its own losses and to exaggerate the number of rebels killed.

More than 60 women abducted by Boko Haram are free again

Press reports of 7 July 2014, most of which cite a local militia leader, state that about 63 of the women and girls that were abducted probably by Boko Haram from the village of Kummabza (Kumanza) and the surrounding settlements (Damboa LGA, Borno state) in mid-June managed to escape their kidnapers. They

had seized the opportunity to flee when the kidnappers had gone to fight in Damboa (see previous news item). Official sources of the federal and of Borno state government have so far confirmed neither the women's kidnapping nor their liberation.

Over 50 fatalities in car bombing in Maiduguri

On 01 July 2014 a car bomb detonated in front of the "Monday Market" near the Elkanemi Roundabout in Maiduguri, capital of the northern state of Borno killing more than 50, among them several members of the vigilante group „Civilian Joint Task Force“ who intended to search the suspicious vehicle. Almost 70 people were wounded, some seriously.

Boko Haram cell uncovered

On 30 June 2014 the military announced the arrest of the members of a Boko Haram "espionage cell". The cell's leader, the businessman Babuji Ya'ari, had been coordinating several fatal assaults of the group in Maiduguri since 2011. They said that he also was one of the main figures involved in the abduction of over 200 schoolgirls in April 2014 in Chibok and had been in command for the fatal attack on the Emir of Gwoza at the end of May 2014. To camouflage his activities he had joined the Civilian Joint Task Force.

Kenya

People die in two attacks

Depending on the source, at least 21 or 29 people were killed in two attacks in Hindi in Lamu district and on a police station in Gamba, Tana River district on 05 July 2014. In Gamba Muslim prisoners were liberated from the police station. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for both attacks. However, a police spokesman blamed the Kenyan organisation Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) that has separatist objectives.

Uganda

Dozens die in attacks on the police and the military

Several police stations and army barracks were attacked in the districts of Kasese, Ntoroko, and Bundibugyo located in the border area to the Democratic Republic of Congo, 41 attackers and several policemen and civilians were killed. The security forces said that the incidents were triggered by ethnic disputes.

Mali

Soldier dies in land mine explosion

On 30 June 2014 one soldier died in the explosion of a land mine that injured six others, three of them seriously. The seven soldiers of the UN Peace Force, all of whom came from Burkina Faso, had driven onto a land mine outside of the town of Goundam near Timbuktu.

Somalia

Suicide attack in front of the parliament building

In a car bomb suicide attack in front of the parliament building in Mogadishu the bomber and at least three others died on 05 July 2014. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the bombing.

Member of parliament assassinated

Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the assassination of a member of parliament on 03 July 2014. This MP is the fourth Somali MP that became a victim of the Islamists in six months. He was shot together with his body guard when leaving a mosque for the parliament. It is reported that another MP and a parliament staff member were seriously injured.

Sudan

Fighting among clans in Kordofan

The state media reported on 03 July 2014 that at least 150 people died and 100 were injured in fighting for land near an oil field between two clans of the Arab Misseriya in West Kordofan.

West Africa

Red Cross suspends Ebola operation in Guinea

The Red Cross temporarily suspended its relief operation to contain the Ebola epidemic in Guinea for security reasons after armed locals had threatened relief workers in a marked Red Cross vehicle. The incident occurred in Gueckedou about 650 km south east of the capital Conakry.

At the same time WHO announced a renewed increase of Ebola infections in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone bringing the total to 759 patients, the death toll since February 2014 is 467.

The Liberian government followed that of Sierra Leone by threatening those who hide relatives suspected of being infected by Ebola with criminal charges.

Senegal

Dionne will be the new Prime Minister

President Sall appointed Mohamed Dionne as Prime Minister on 06 July 2014 after the resignation of former Prime Minister Touré. After ten months in office Aminata Touré had resigned two days before when her governing APR party suffered a drastic defeat in the local elections.

Ukraine

Military offensive against separatists - Ukrainian army advances on Donetsk

While advancing on the rebel stronghold Donetsk the Ukrainian army reconquered two more towns, Artemivsk and Druzhkivka, from the pro-Russian separatists. The rebel holdouts Sloviansk and Kramatorsk had already been taken back by the government troops before which prompted the separatists to withdraw to Donetsk, about one hundred kilometres south of Sloviansk. The rebels also abandoned the town Kostyantynivka. President Poroshenko declared the recent success of the Ukrainian army the turning point in the fight against the separatists. The Ukrainian army is now besieging Donetsk and Luhansk trying to force the separatists to surrender.

At the same time the pro-Russian separatists announced that they will resist fiercely. On 06 July 2014 separatist leader Denis Pushilin wrote on Twitter that Donetsk was preparing to defend itself. "We concentrated all our forces here. The defence of Donetsk will be a turning point. We will win." On the same day more than 2,000 supporters of the self-proclaimed "Donetsk People's Republic" gathered in the city centre to demonstrate their determination to make a stand in their stronghold. The separatist's insurgency had started in March 2014 and has claimed at least 470 lives since.

Serbia/Bosnia and Herzegovina

International donor conference for flood damage

After the flood disaster in May that caused enormous damage in Serbia and Bosnia (as well as in Croatia) another international donor conference will be held in Brussels on 16 July 2014. A total of three million people (including about 10,000 Romany) were directly or indirectly affected by the flood; there were more than 70 casualties. The damage in Bosnia is estimated to amount to up to €2bn; no figures are available for Serbia as yet.

More than 1,800 buildings were destroyed in Serbia. 2,500-3,000 buildings as well as many bridges, roads, schools and hospital are damaged. A total of about 32,000 people had to be evacuated. About 5,000 had first been housed in emergency shelters and about 1,500 people are still there (e.g. in Krnjaca near Belgrade).

About 17,000 people were taken in by friends or relatives. In Bosnia about 75,000 buildings were damaged and 2,000 are completely devastated. Initially about 40,000 people had to be evacuated; 1,262 people are still staying in shelters at this time.

UN agencies made available USD1.5m in emergency relief. Further numerous organisations (THW, IRC, Caritas, OXFAM, WHO, WFP) and many other countries (Russia, Turkey, Norway, Switzerland and others) sent material and financial assistance. The EU contributed €3m in emergency relief and made another €62m available to repair the flood damage and reconstruct. The Serbian government said that the country has received monetary donations amounting to almost €7m and material aid worth €19.5m.

Serbia/Bosnia and Herzegovina/FYR Macedonia

German parliament approves classification of Serbia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina as safe countries of origin

On 03 July 2014 the German parliament adopted a bill (BT-Drs. 18/1528) submitted by the Federal Government to classify Serbia, the FYR Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina as safe countries of origin following a recommendation of the Home Affairs Committee (BT-Drs. 18/1954). Thus these countries will now be considered to be safe countries of origin under the Asylum Procedure Act. The consent of the second chamber of the German parliament, the Bundestag, is still outstanding.

FYR Macedonia

Ethnic Albanians protest violently

On 04 July 2014 thousands of young ethnic Albanians clashed with the police in Skopje, 20 policemen and several protesters were injured. The riots were triggered by life prison sentences for six Albanians who were found guilty of killing five Macedonians two years ago. The judiciary accused the protesters of acting on political motives.

More violence occurred in Tetovo on 06 July 2014 when about 600 youths took to the streets.

Albanians account for almost one third of Macedonia's population and frequently complain of discrimination. Time and again ethnic tensions erupt in the country.

Myanmar

Violence against Muslims

In the country's second city Mandalay Muslims were attacked in the predominantly Muslim quarter of Chan Aye Tharzan in the night of 1 to 2 July 2014 and the following night. The violence followed social media reports of the alleged rape of a Buddhist woman by the Muslim owner of a tea shop; some sources spoke of two rapists. Cars, shops, and houses of Muslims and one mosque were damaged. On 02 July 2014 one Muslim and one Buddhist died after each of them was attacked by a mob. On 03 July 2014 the police imposed a night curfew. Four people were arrested.

China

Hong Kong: Arrests after mass protests

On the anniversary of the return to China of the former British Crown colony Hong Kong (01 July 1997) several ten thousands staged a peaceful protest for free and direct elections. The police reported that about 92,000 people attended the protest, while the organizers speak of 510,000. Hundreds of activists held an overnight sit-in in the financial district after the protest which was disbanded by the police on 02 July 2014. 511 people were arrested including three opposition MPs. On 04 July 2014 the police arrested five of the organizers of the protest.

In June 2014 the Beijing government had made it publicly clear in a white paper that the extent of autonomy granted to Hong Kong solely depended on the good will of the Chinese government.