

## Asylum and Migration Information Centre

# Briefing Notes

8 July 2013

### Iraq

#### Security situation

On 01.07.13, a suicide bomber targeted a Shia mosque in Muqdadiyah (Diyala province), killing between nine and 23 people, with media reports varying on the number of victims. In Baquba (Diyala province), a suicide attack on a café left eight people dead and 29 injured. On 02.07.13, a wave of bombings killed a total of 60 people and wounded more than 100, official sources reported. Most of the victims were hit in Baghdad, with more than 40 casualties and over 70 injured, when a total of nine blasts occurred. Further attacks were launched in Baquba (Diyala province), Mosul (Ninewa province) and Samawah (Muthanna province).

On 03.07.13, a total of 14 people were killed in Baghdad, Mosul and other places.

On 05.07.13, attacks in Samarra, Baquba and Kirkuk claimed at least 19 lives. Most of the victims were killed during the explosion of a car bomb in the city centre of Samarra, where several people were also wounded; in Kirkuk, two insurgents lost their lives. Last Friday, a suicide attack near a Shia worship site in Baghdad claimed another 15 lives and wounded more than 30 people.

The UN report that during the last three months, a total of over 2,500 people have lost their lives in attacks.

According to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), a total of 761 Iraqis were killed and another 1,771 were wounded in the month of June alone. Baghdad was the worst-affected province, followed by Salahuddin, Ninewa, Diyala and Anbar.

### Pakistan

#### Government resumes execution of death sentences

On 30.06.13, the moratorium on death penalty expired, which had been imposed by the previous government. Since 2008, only one soldier has been executed (in November 2012). Now, the new government led by the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) has decided to end the ban on the death penalty. In death penalty cases, the President must confirm every sentence before capital punishment can be executed. The term of office of President Asif Ali Zardari, member of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), ends in August 2013. After the defeat of the PPP and the landslide victory of the PML-N in the last elections, the new President is expected to be nominated by and elected with the support of the PPP. The decision of the government to resume capital punishment will most probably be implemented. Besides, Presidential spokesman Farhatullah Babar stated that the President had suspended executions upon request of the government under Prime Minister Gilani, but that he considered himself bound to implement the decision of the current government and would not object to future executions. Meanwhile, applications for the enforcement of the death penalty are forwarded to the President's Office on a daily basis.

Amnesty International (AI) has condemned the government's decision as 'a shocking and retrograde step, putting thousands of people's lives at risk'. The organisation urged the new Pakistani government to impose an immediate moratorium on the use of the death penalty as a first step towards abolition. According to AI, Pakistan has more than 8,000 prisoners on death row, who could now be facing execution. The risk of executing innocent people could never be eliminated, AI said.

## **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Attacks on security forces**

### **Peshawar**

On 02.07.13, dozens of insurgents attacked a security check post at Shamshato area near Peshawar, killing six Frontier Constabulary soldiers and leaving 12 other injured. According to official reports, some of the insurgents also lost their lives. Also, considerable material damage was caused to the control point and to several cars parked nearby. The Pakistani Taliban have claimed responsibility for the attack, their spokesman Ihsanullah Ihsan said in phone calls to reporters.

On 04.07.13, Pakistani security forces conducted a military campaign in Peshawar region near Mattani in reaction to the above attack, in which two security officers had been abducted and killed. In clashes with members of the Pakistani Taliban, one security officer and two militants were killed. The killed insurgents are said to be leading Taliban members.

### **North Waziristan**

Four members of the security forces were killed in North Waziristan (FATA Agency) on 04.07.13 when they stopped a suspicious vehicle at Boya checkpoint near Datta Khel village. The driver of the vehicle detonated a bomb close to the checkpoint.

## **Punjab: Bomb attack in busy market street in Lahore**

On 06.08.13, a bomb was detonated in a busy market street in the Old Anarkali bazar of Lahore, killing five people and injuring 47. Police have arrested dozens of suspects. The separatist organization *Baloch Liberation Tigers* is said to have claimed responsibility for the attack.

## **Syria**

### **Ahmed Assi Jarba new President of Syrian National Coalition**

On 07.06.13, the main Syrian opposition National Coalition elected Sunni tribal leader Ahmed Assi Jarba as its president with 55 of 114 votes in Istanbul. He is close to the liberal group around dissident Michel Kilo and has the support of Saudi Arabia. In recent months, he has played a major role in the attempt to convince both Western and Arab states to support the rebels with weapons. Muslim Brotherhood representative Mohammed Farouk Tayfur was elected as one of the three vice presidents. In April 2013, opposition leader Mouaz al-Khatib had resigned in protest against lack of support from the international community; George Sabra has led the opposition as interim president since then.

### **New clashes in Syria**

The Syrian army is continuing operations against the city of Homs that started one week ago. Homs has been in the hands of the rebels for more than a year. Also, fights are continuing between government troops and insurgents both in the city and the province of Aleppo, in the cities of Nubul and Zahra, as well as in the capital Damascus.

### **UN Security Council deeply divided**

On 05.07.13, Russia blocked a UN Security Council statement calling on Syrian President Assad to allow humanitarian aid organizations immediate access to roughly 2,500 civilians trapped in Homs. According to UN estimates, more than 93,000 people have lost their lives since unrest started in the country; the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports a figure of more than 100,000.

### **Threatening food crisis**

On 05.07.13, the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) presented a joint report in Rome, stating that the food security situation in Syria would further decline over the next two years if the present conflict continues. Already now, 4 million Syrians are hardly able to secure enough food, the report went on. With many farmers having left the country and a lot of production machinery destroyed, food supply shortage is aggravated by several factors including the large number of refugees, high unemployment rates, rising fuel prices and EU/U.S. sanctions. According to UN estimates, more than 10 million Syrians could be forced to live as refugees within Syria or abroad by the end of the year.

## **Turkey**

### **Protests crushed**

Shortly before the planned reopening of Gezi Park, police again used water cannons and tear gas against approx. 3,000 protesters to block access to nearby Taksim Square. The protesters had gathered in a pedestrian zone leading to the Square with the intention to enter the closed Park. Taksim Square was the centre of last weeks' protests, which had started over plans to redesign Gezi Park and then turned into general protest against Prime Minister Erdogan's style of government.

It was only last week that a June decision of a Turkish court was published, which found that the plans to redevelop Gezi Park were illegal because the public had not been heard on the issue.

## **Libya**

### **Tripoli: Interior ministry besieged by militia members**

Since 02.07.13, unidentified militiamen have been besieging the interior ministry in Tripoli. When the gunmen entered the building, there was no staff inside; neither were there fights with the guards who retreated immediately. The militiamen appear to demand the disarmament of some other militias who form a body known as the Supreme Security Committee (SSC) operating under the auspices of the interior ministry. The justice minister has announced once more that the government would be elaborating plans to dissolve the militias.

### **Libyan-Egyptian border-crossing at Musaid temporarily closed after Muslim Brotherhood head tried to flee to Libya**

On 03.07.13, Libyan security forces closed the Libyan-Egyptian border crossing after Mohammed Badie, head of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, tried to escape to Libya, official sources stated. Together with ousted President Morsi, Mr Badie has been banned from leaving the country since the military takeover. He was arrested near the border by Egyptian military officers. Meanwhile, Bashir Salim Al-Kibti, leader of the sister organisation Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, whose Justice and Construction party is the second largest in Congress, has stated that any request for political asylum in Libya made by an Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood member should be accepted, if he was a member of the government or part of the Jemaah Islamiyah (Egyptian terror organisation).

## **Egypt**

### **President Morsi ousted in coup**

After violent clashes between supporters and opponents of President Morsi during the previous days, the military leadership under defence minister General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi imposed an ultimatum on 01.07.13 on the President ordering him to seek for a peaceful settlement of the conflict within 48 hours. However, President Morsi rejected any concessions or resignation. After the expiry of the deadline, the defence minister delivered a TV statement announcing the ouster of the President. As interim leader, the President of Egypt's Constitutional Court, Adly Mansour was sworn in. At the same time, the current constitution drafted by Islamists was suspended.

On 05.07.13, interim head of state Mansour dissolved the smaller chamber of parliament, the Shura Council, where Salafists and Muslim Brotherhood members held 150 of the 270 seats. (The first parliamentary chamber had already been dissolved in 2012 due to formal errors in the electoral legislation).

As possible future Prime Minister of a transitional government, secular Nobel Peace Laureate Mohammed el-Baradei's name was circulated initially. However, his nomination was put on hold by the Salafist-based An-Nur Party which had originally supported President Morsi, but then joined the opposition. Social Democratic lawyer Ziaad Bahaa el-Din's name was put forward as a compromise candidate. Under President Mubarak, he had been the head of Egypt's investment authority, but stepped down from this office prior to Mubarak's departure. However, he was also rejected by the Salafists who want a politically neutral person for the office of the Prime Minister.

## **Continuing violence**

Mass protests staged on 05.07.13 and the following night led again to violent clashes between supporters and opponents of the ousted President. A total of 36 people lost their lives all over the country. In the morning of 08.07.13, a shooting in front of the President's Guards headquarters in Cairo claimed the lives of 34 people. The military building where President Morsi is believed to stay, was attacked by a 'terrorist group', the army stated. According to the Muslim Brotherhood, security officials shot at protesters during a demonstration against the overthrow of President Morsi. This incident was the reason why the An-Nur Party has withdrawn from negotiations on the formation of a new government.

## **Russian Federation**

### **Trial against Alexei Navalny**

Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny may be facing a long prison term. On 05.07.13, the public prosecutors called for a six-year prison sentence plus a fine of one million Russian rubles (approx. 23,000 Euro) for the blogger in the trial before the Lenin District Court in the industrial city of Kirov, 600 kilometres north east of Moscow.

The investigators are accusing him of having enriched himself unlawfully while working as an advisor for the Kirov region governor in 2009, saying that he had founded the company WLK together with a partner and then forced the state-owned forest enterprise Kirovles to sell 10,000 cubic metres of wood below market value to them. Mr Navalny, in turn, asserts his innocence. „There is no evidence against him“, his lawyer Olga Mikhailova said in her final address asserting that witnesses had exonerated her client. Also, the defence repeated its application not to take into account the testimony of Vyacheslav Opalev in the judgement. Last year, the former WLK manager had confessed participation in the embezzlement of 16 million Russian rubles and concluded an agreement with the investigators, leading to a four-year suspended sentence for him. In Mr Navalny's opinion, the investigators had assured Mr Opalev a mild punishment in exchange for him incriminating the opposition leader.

### **Background information**

Alexei Navalny has become one of the most prominent critics of President Vladimir Putin by making public cases of corruption and abuse of power in Russia. Also, he participated in the organisation of the protest movement against the head of state both in 2011 and 2012.

Should he indeed be sentenced to a prison term, he would not be released before the next presidential elections scheduled for 2018. Also, he would lose his right to political activity. In the beginning of 2013, President Putin introduced a bill in the Duma excluding ex-offenders from standing as a candidate in elections.

## **Russian Federation/North Caucasus**

### **Chechen separatist leader calls for terror attacks at Winter Olympics in 2014**

Doku Umarov, leader of the Islamist militants in Russia's North Caucasus, has urged his fighters to inflict terror on the Winter Games in the Black Sea resort Sochi in February 2014. In a video message published in the internet on 03.07.13, the Chechen separatist leader and public enemy number one of the Russian government said that the Russians were planning to host the Olympic Games 'on the bones of our ancestors buried in our territory along the Black Sea', and that this must be avoided by all means. The Winter Games scheduled from 7th to 23rd February 2014 are a Russian prestige object cherished by President Putin. The venue of the games, the city of Sochi on the Black Sea coast, is located in immediate proximity to the troubled North Caucasus region, where Muslim extremists are fighting to establish an Islamic state.

### **Background information**

Armed resistance under the name of Jihad is coordinated by a so-called Caucasian Emirate which Doku Umarov proclaimed in 2007. The Emirate is in close contact with the global Jihad movement. Doku Umarov and the Caucasian Emirate have claimed responsibility the devastating terror attacks, including the attack on Moscow's Domodedovo airport in January 2011, where 40 people died, and on the capital's metro in March 2010 with 40 fatalities. In stark contrast to these actions, Doku Umarov surprisingly called on his followers

to halt attacks on civilians in January 2012.

## **Kosovo**

### **Serb minority opposes normalization agreement**

Members of Kosovo's ethnic Serb minority have called into question the normalization agreement approved by the Kosovo parliament on 27.06.13 by unilaterally forming their own assembly. On 04.07.13, the representatives of the four Serb municipalities in the northern part of the country established a parliament of their own in the town of Zvecan. Slavko Stevanovic, head of the town council of Leposavic, was elected president of the parliament. Also, the Kosovo Serbs intend to boycott the communal elections scheduled for 03.11.13, which constitute a core aspect of the EU brokered normalization agreement.

## **Croatia**

### **EU accession**

On 01.07.13, Croatia became the 28<sup>th</sup> member of the European Union. The country, which gained its independence in 1991, is the second EU Member State from former Yugoslavia after Slovenia.

## **Nigeria**

### **Boko Haram: School massacre**

In the night to 06.07.13 around 3 o'clock in the morning, suspected members of the Boko Haram Islamist terror organisation attacked a boarding Government Secondary School in Mamudo town (Potiskum Local Government Area) of northeast Yobe State. Eyewitnesses reported that the attackers entered the premises with petrol cans and burnt down the administrative building and a dormitory, shooting at students who tried to escape. According to information provided on 07.07.13, a total of 31 students and a resident lost their lives. On 07.07.13, the Governor of Yobe ordered the closure of all secondary schools in the State until the beginning of the next school year. By then, new measures would be in place to protect students and teachers.

## **Zimbabwe**

### **Constitutional Court confirms 31.07.13 as date of parliamentary and presidential elections**

On 04.07.13, Zimbabwe's Constitutional Court dismissed an application filed by Prime Minister Tsvangirai seeking to delay the parliamentary and presidential elections for at least two weeks, thus confirming the date of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013 originally set by President Mugabe. Mr Tsvangirai, who has accepted the court decision, had wanted to implement several reforms before the elections in order to limit the possibilities of the media and the security forces to openly express support for President Mugabe. Both the South African Development Community (SADC) and the Zimbabwe opposition forces said that more time was needed for the preparation of fair and free elections than was given by the current election date.

89-year-old President Mugabe, who has been in office since 1980, and opposition leader Tsvangirai will both stand for election again. In 2008, Morgan Tsvangirai withdrew in the second round of presidential elections, after his supporters had been attacked by security forces and pro-Mugabe militias all over the country. In February 2009, a unity government was formed with Mr Tsvangirai as Prime Minister.

## **India**

### **Maoist rebels surrounded**

In eastern Jharkhand state, more than 1,500 police officers have surrounded a base camp of Maoist insurgents. The authorities are suspecting at least 250 rebels to hide in the woods near the besieged hill. Early in 2013, ten police officers had been shot dead and ten others wounded in an ambush by Maoist rebels in the same district. At the end of June, eight Maoists were killed in a shoot-out with police forces. On 02.07.13, five police officers were killed in a different district of Jharkhand state.

Maoist rebels are actively operating in over a third of India's administrative districts. They reject parliamentary democracy, claiming to fight for the poor and socially excluded people. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh considers the Maoists as the 'gravest threat to the country's internal security'. Since 2009, a large offensive has been going on against the insurgents. However, critics say that the conflict can only be settled by political and social reforms and by developing the neglected rural areas.

### **Explosions in sacred Buddhist shrine**

On 07.07.13, one of the holiest Buddhist sites in the eastern part of the country was struck by a series of explosions. According to police information, a total of eight small devices were detonated at the Bodh Gaya temple complex, a famous UNESCO World Heritage Site, injuring two monks. The authorities suspect the 'Indian Mujahideen' behind the attack, a terrorist group responsible for several attacks carried out in India since 2007. Attacks on Buddhists are rare in India; however, tensions are growing in the whole region after violent clashes between Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

## **China**

### **Violence in Xinjiang**

On 28.06.13, police officers fired at a protesting crowd of up to 400 Uighurs in Hanerik township near the city of Hotan (in Chinese: Hetian); up to 15 people died in the incident. The background of the events is unclear, with some sources saying that the protests were staged after the authorities had closed down a mosque and arrested the Imam.