

Group 22 – Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

27 June 2016

Reduced version due to current staffing constraints

Afghanistan

Security situation

In a report submitted to Congress, the U.S. Department of Defense notes a deterioration of security in view of the reduced international military presence and the weakness of the Afghan forces. While the Afghan government retained control of most city centres, the Taliban continued to expand their influence, especially in rural areas, the report says, demonstrating their resilience by attacks in Nangarhar, Herat, Kunduz and other northern provinces as well as in Helmand.

Increasingly, the Taliban insurgents were launching major attacks in urban centres, the report continues. From January to May, a total of 2,496 civilian casualties including 760 deaths were documented, the report went on.

In Nangarhar province, at least 135 rebels and 12 members of the security forces have died in a clash between the Afghan military and ISIS rebels. The fights started on 24 June 2016, when hundreds of ISIS insurgents attacked a military post in Kot district.

Attacks

On 20 June 2016, an attack on a member of the Kabul provincial council left 6 people wounded, among them the council member and his body guard.

On the same day, a bomb planted in a motorbike killed 8 people and injured another 14 in a market in northern Badakhshan province.

Intra-Taliban fighting

On 22 June 2016, a spokesman of the governor of Herat province stated that 20 militants were killed in fights between a Taliban splinter faction supporting dissident Mullah Mohammed Rasool, who is opposing the appointment of Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada as the new Taliban leader, and followers of Akhundzada. The clash did not result in any civilian casualties, it was stated.

Bus passengers kidnapped

On 22 June 2016, Taliban insurgents ambushed a series of buses and other vehicles in Gareshk district (southern Helmand province) and abducted around 60 passengers. Shortly afterwards, they let those go who were travelling with their families. In an internet message, the Taliban stated that they had detained '27 suspected individuals'. If these turned out to be working for the government, they would be submitted to the Islamic emirate's courts, the Taliban said. Tribal elders intervened and succeeded in releasing all but two hostages.

Iraq

City of Fallujah liberated

On 26 June 2016, Iraqi forces recaptured the last district held by Islamic State militants, a military spokesman said. At the end of May, Iraqi government troops, backed by air strikes of the US-led military coalition, had started a major offensive to retake the city (50 km west of Baghdad), which had been seized by ISIS combatants in January 2014 (see BN of 20 June 2016, 13 June 2016 and 06 June 2016).

Syria

Air strikes claim scores of lives

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says that on 25 June 2016, more than 80 people were killed in air strikes launched in the eastern parts of the country targeting the ISIS-held town of al-Quriyah in Syria's oil-rich Deir ez-Zor province. Apparently, the attacks were launched by Russian and Syrian airplanes.

Lebanon

Suicide bombers kill five people

In the morning of 27 June 2016, four suicide bombers killed at least 5 people and wounded 19 more in a series of attacks in the Lebanese Christian village of Qaa near the Syrian border. So far, no-one has claimed responsibility for the attacks. It is believed that the attacks were in connection with the civil war in Syria which has stoked religious tensions in Lebanon. Attacks and fights have been frequent between the Lebanese army and jihadists, particularly in the area bordering Syria.

South Sudan

Civilians are fleeing violence

On 25 June 2016, the UN stated that fights between the South Sudanese troops and armed groups had driven thousands of civilians to flee their homes in and around the town of Wau (northwestern Bahr el Ghazal state). The identity of the groups is unclear.

DR Congo

Opposition leader Moïse Katumbi sentenced to three years imprisonment

On 22 June 2016, a 'tribunal de paix' in Lubumbashi, the Democratic Republic of Congo's second biggest city in the country's southeast, sentenced, former governor of Katanga province and presidential candidate of the leading opposition group G7 Moïse Katumbi in absentia to three years in prison and fined him to pay \$1 million in damage compensation to the plaintiff. The court found him guilty of fraud in connection with the acquisition of a house allegedly owned by the Greek plaintiff. Katumbi's lawyer, however, claims that the house was owned by a brother of Katumbi. If the judgement were to become final, Katumbi would be a convicted criminal and not be able to run in the presidential elections initially scheduled for November 2016. On 19 May 2016, an arrest warrant was issued against Katumbi, who is presently the leading opposition figure in the country, for hiring foreign mercenaries and thus threatening state security. The public prosecutor allowed him to leave the country on 20 May for medical treatment.

Former DRC vice-president Bemba sentenced to 18 years by ICC

On 21 June 2016, the International Criminal Court ICC in The Hague sentenced Jean-Pierre Bemba, DRC's former vice-president (2003-2006), to 18 years in prison for war crimes and crimes against humanity. In March 2016, Bemba had already been found guilty for being in charge of the militia 'Congolese Liberation Movement' (MLC) whose members had committed crimes like torturing and killing scores of men, women and children, raping women and girls, as well as looting, after he had sent them into neighbouring Central African Republic from October 2002 to March 2003 to put down a coup. The years he has spent in detention since 2008 will be deducted from his sentence. The ICC's verdict has been appealed.

Somalia

Attack at Mogadishu hotel

On 25 June 2016, a terror attack on a hotel popular among Somali businessmen and foreigners killed at least 15 people and injured at least 20 more. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the assault.

Unrest in Puntland

English-speaking Somali media report that Abdismad Mohammad Galan, a former governor of Bari region, is currently trying to seize power in Puntland and to oust President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali 'Gas' who had been elected in January 2014. Clan elders from Puntland have started negotiations to prevent clashes between rebels and security forces. In a radio interview, Galan said that he took up arms to liberate the people from a 'tyrannical leader' and a 'dictatorial government'. On 23 June 2016, fighting erupted near the city of Armo (Bari region), when soldiers from Puntland attacked Galan's base. In a telephone interview, Galan said that his forces had succeeded in repelling the attack, inflicting casualties upon the enemy and destroying an army vehicle.

Nigeria

5,000 Boko Haram hostages liberated

On 26 June 2016, military spokesman Colonel Sani Usman stated that the army and members of local militias have liberated over 5,000 people held hostage by the Islamist terror group Boko Haram in the villages of Zangebe, Maiwa, Algaiti and Mainari (northeastern Borno State) during security operations. Six terrorists were killed, he said.

Almost 200 people died in refugee camp

On 23 June 2016, the aid organisation Doctors without Borders warned of an impending humanitarian catastrophe in a camp for displaced people set up in a hospital compound in the city of Bama (northeastern Borno State, about 70 km west of Maiduguri). The camp hosts about 24,000 people who fled Boko Haram, among them 15,000 children. On 21 June, a needs assessment conducted in the camp showed that almost one child in five living there was suffering from acute malnutrition, with 16 being in a life-threatening situation. Since 23 May, at least 188 persons have died, many of them from diarrhoeal diseases and malnutrition.

FYR Macedonia

President Ivanov escapes Impeachment

On 21 June 2016, parliament rejected an impeachment motion against President Gjorge Ivanov initiated by the major opposition party SDSM (Social Democrats) and the co-governing ethnic Albanian DUI (Democratic Union for Integration). 35 of 123 MPs voted in favour of Ivanov's removal from office, 47 were against it. Thus, the necessary two-thirds majority was not obtained. Following the parliamentary elections of April 2014, the country slid into a crisis of governance when the SDSM accused the largest ruling party VMRO-DPMNE of electoral fraud. On 12 April 2016, the crisis intensified when President Ivanov pardoned 56 politicians in the middle of investigations into a wiretapping affair including former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski of the VMRO-DPMNE party. After intense international pressure, the President repealed the amnesty on 6 June.

Columbia

Cease-fire agreement concluded

On 23 June 2016, the government and the rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) signed a ceasefire agreement in Havana, Cuba. The agreement provides for the rebels to lay down their arms and to pursue their objectives with political means only. The ceasefire, which has widely been called a genuine historical step, is the precondition for a peace treaty which has been under negotiation since the end of 2012. The parties have already agreed on transitional justice programmes, social programmes and political participation for former guerrillas. The long-lasting conflict, which until recently involved several guerrilla and paramilitary groups, has claimed more than 200,000 lives and displaced about six million people. At present, FARC has about 7,000 armed fighters. The smaller guerrilla force Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) is still active.