

## Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

4 July 2016

**Abridged version due to staff shortage!**

### **Afghanistan**

#### **Security situation**

The fighting, attacks and ambushes continue. The affected provinces were Badakhshan, Kunduz, Maidan Wardak, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Faryab, Khos, Ghazni, Nuristan and Uruzgan.

#### **Attacks**

On 28 June 2016 unknown gunmen shot an appeals court judge of Ghazni province in his apartment in Kabul. At least 27 police recruits were killed and 40 people were injured in a Taliban suicide bombing of a police convoy in Kabul province (Paghman district) on 30 June 2016. Five secret service staff were injured and one killed when the Taliban attacked their convoy in Ghazni province in the south-east. On 03 July 2016 a school was burnt down in the northern province of Baghlan. On 02 July 2016 at least two civilians lost their lives and 17 were wounded in a suicide attack in Jalalabad (Nangarhar province).

### **Iraq**

#### **Many IS fighters killed when fleeing Fallujah**

The army informed that after Fallujah's complete recapture from IS militias (see BN of 27 June 2016) the extremists abandoned the last city district without fighting and retired to the city's surroundings on 26 June 2016. On 29 June 2016 at least 250 IS fighters were killed and about 260 IS vehicles were destroyed by air strikes. The raids were flown by the Iraqi air force with the support of the international military coalition. The army now intends to reconquer Mosul, the last major Iraqi town still held by IS.

#### **Two senior IS commanders killed in an air strike**

The US-led international coalition announced that IS deputy war minister Muhammad Ahmad Sultan al-Bajari died in one of its air raids near Mosul already on 25 June 2016; at the same time Hatim Talib Al Hamduni, a senior IS military commander, had died, the coalition said.

#### **Bombings in Baghdad**

At least 120 people were reportedly killed and over 200 injured in two suicide bombings on 03 July 2016, the death toll is expected to rise. The explosion of a car bomb near a restaurant in the city district of Karrada was one of the deadliest attacks since the beginning of the year.

A shopping centre and several buildings were completely destroyed. Media reported that the suicide bombing targeted a gathering of Shiites. Allegedly a second bomb was detonated in a busy shopping street in the Shiite district of Al-Shaab. Reports are contradictory. IS claimed responsibility at least for the bombing in Karrada. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi ordered a revision of the security concept for Baghdad. This will entail stepping up air reconnaissance and reorganizing the control posts. Furthermore, the forged explosives detectors used by many of the security forces, although their uselessness has been known for years, may not be used anymore.

### **Iran**

### **Hundreds of journalist threatened by anonymous text messages**

Hundreds of journalists in Iran received anonymous text messages warning them against contacting or cooperating with so-called enemy elements abroad. ISNA news agency reported that the messages said such contacts constituted a crime which would be prosecuted. In April four journalist were given prison sentences between five and ten years. They were accused of having collaborated with foreign governments, thereby undermining Iran's national security. The MP Ali Motahari said that the text message had caused great concern among the journalists. The secret service should investigate who sent these messages and the judiciary should take action against those responsible.

## **Syria**

### **Air strikes on rebel stronghold**

The Syrian Human Rights Observatory reported on 03 July 2016 that at least 43 people had been killed in air strikes by the Syrian air force on the city of Jairud, one of the rebel strongholds near Damascus. Allegedly the strikes were flown in revenge for the killing of a government military pilot who had made an emergency landing near Jairud and was then shot by members of the Saudi-supported Jaish al-Islam rebel organisation. The latter's spokesman claimed that Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) had been responsible instead.

### **Abduction of the head of Jaish al-Tahir**

Reportedly fighters of the Islamist JN group abducted the head of the US-supported rebel group Jaish al-Tahrir, Mohammed al-Gabi, along with many of the group's followers on 02 July 2016. Furthermore, more than 40 fighters of this group have allegedly been abducted from bases or road blocks.

## **Turkey/Syria**

### **Erdogan holds out prospects to gain Turkish nationality to Syrians**

On 02 July 2016 Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan opened up the prospect of simplified access to Turkish nationality for the approx. 2.7 million Syrians currently staying in Turkey. He did not give any details.

## **Turkey**

### **Attack in Istanbul airport**

In the evening of 28 June 2016 three suicide bombers killed 45 people and injured 239 at Istanbul airport. The attackers, a Russian, an Uzbek, and a Kyrgyz, first opened gunfire and then blew themselves up. Several persons with ties to the IS terror militia were arrested on 30 June 2016 and on 03 July 2016.

## **Yemen**

### **Suicide bombings in the south-east**

On 27 June 2016 over 40 people, most of them soldiers, were killed in several suicide attacks in the port city of Mukalla (in the south-east, a former stronghold of the Al-Qaeda network). At least five attackers blew themselves up in at least four different places. The terror militia IS claimed responsibility for the attacks.

### **Air raids in the south**

While the Kuwait peace talks are stuck - they are scheduled to resume in mid-July - violence is increasing again. On 27 June 2016 the Saudi-led military alliance bombed Shiite Houthi rebels in the south between two villages in the Tais region, killing at least 15 fighters and 10 civilians.

## **Senegal**

### **Former president's son pardoned**

The son of former Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade (2000 to 2012) who had been sentenced for corruption, has been pardoned. A local radio station reported that Karim Wade was released in the night of 24 June 2016 and immediately embarked for Qatar after his pardon by President Sall. Karim Wade had been arrested in April 2013. He is suspected of having embezzled about € 180m in public funds. In 2015 a Dakar court convicted him of illicit enrichment and sentenced him to six years imprisonment and a fine of \$230m. Wade had always denied the corruption charges.

## **Nigeria**

### **Niger Delta Avengers strike again**

On 03 July 2016 the rebel group Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) has claimed responsibility for five attacks on oil installations in the delta since 01 July 2016 via Twitter. A one month ceasefire allegedly negotiated by representatives of the Nigerian oil ministry with the NDA had been promptly denied by the NDA on 21 June 2016. Previously the NDA had attacked on 16 June 2016. This grouping had appeared in the oil-rich Niger delta in February 2016 for the first time. The NDA's attacks as well as those of other, newly formed militant groups caused oil production to drop from 2.2m barrels per day in early 2016 to currently about 1.6m, which is a 30-year low.

## **Cameroon**

### **Boko Haram suicide bombing**

In the evening of 29 June 2016 a boy blew himself up near a mosque in the village of Djakana (near the Nigerian border) in a suicide bombing orchestrated by the Boko Haram terror organization. The faithful had come together there in a tent after evening prayers. In addition to the bomber, ten people died in the attack and four were injured.

## **Kosovo**

### **Less German soldiers – Stable security situation**

While the German Parliament approved the extension of the KFOR mandate on 23 June 2016, the strength of the force will be reduced from 1,850 to 1,350 German soldiers.

The security situation is generally stable. Kosovo's police is increasingly able to ensure public law and order without international support. However, KFOR is still required to maintain a safe and stable environment and ensure the freedom of movement, particularly in the north.

### **Corruption in the health care system**

Prosecutors recently uncovered a corrupt network of physicians and officials enriching themselves by fictitious stent operations. 64 officials, including a former minister of health, and 44 doctors were charged for corruption. Doctors received money for referring patients requiring a coronary stent implant to private hospitals. In two private hospitals over 200 people have died between 2011 and 2014.

Already in June 2015 six former senior officials of the health ministry and two private individuals were indicted for abuse of official duties (embezzlement and other charges).

Kosovo is one of the most corrupt countries in Europe. Corruption is widespread in all spheres of public life and particularly in the health care system. The restructuring of comprehensive medical care by the public health system is making hardly any progress at all. With the funds available no more than very basic medical care can be provided

### **Decision on visa exemption postponed**

On 08 June 2016 the EU Ministers of Interior postponed the decision on visa-free travel (also for Turkey, Ukraine, and Georgia). The EU Commission has been negotiating the visa exemption since 2012. As recently as 04 May 2016 the EU Commission had proposed speedy visa liberalization for Kosovo.

## **Bangladesh**

### **Kidnapping in Dhaka**

On 02 July 2016 terrorists assaulted a restaurant favoured by foreigners in Dhaka and took the guests hostage. During the liberation operation by special police forces the six kidnappers, 20 foreigners and two policemen were killed. Reportedly one of the attackers has been arrested. The government informed that the attackers were members of the banned Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) organisation.

## **Myanmar**

### **Attacks on mosques**

On 01 July 2016 a group of armed Buddhist citizens of the mining city of Hpakant in the northernmost state of Kachin, assaulted a mosque and burnt it down. They attacked the policemen guarding the mosque and prevented the fire brigade from accessing the grounds.

Eight days earlier the Buddhist villagers of Thayel Tha Mein in the central state of Bago had also burnt down a mosque causing the Muslim villagers to flee to a neighbouring village.