

Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

14 October 2013

Afghanistan

Last ISAF mandate

The UN Security Council voted what will probably be the last mandate for the International Security Assistance Force for Afghanistan on 10 October 2013. All 15 members of the Council authorized the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to “take all necessary measures” to carry out its duties until 31 December 2014

Status of negotiations on a security pact with the USA

The US and Afghanistan reached partial agreement in negotiations on a bilateral security pact on 11 and 12 October 2013 which have been ongoing for over a year. The pact is to regulate the presence of US troops in Afghanistan after 2014. The US wanted to deploy up to 10,000 troops in Afghanistan after 2014, However, no agreement was reached in the key issue of immunity for US troops in Afghanistan which President Karzai said the grand assembly (Loya Jirga) would vote upon in November 2013.

High-ranking member of the Taliban captured

The negotiations on a security pact were overshadowed by the seizure of a high-ranking Commander of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan under unknown circumstances during a US military operation in Afghanistan. The US State Department announced the capture on 11 October 2013.

Security situation

At least two police officers were killed and eight civilians were wounded in a suicide bombing in the city of Jalalabad, eastern Afghanistan, last week, At least eleven people were killed in acts of violence in Paktika province. Ten civilians were killed in the East of the country. The Ministry of the Interior says the perpetrators accused them of having contacts with government agencies. Seven people are said to have been killed in a missile attack launched by the Taliban. One man was killed in a mine explosion.

Pakistan

Attacks on government representatives and auxiliary staff in Balochistan

According to government sources, Baloch militants carried out a number of attacks in the earthquake-stricken areas of Mashkay und Awara on 9 October 2013. One person was killed. Baloch nationalists say the militants opened indiscriminate fire on civilians.

Suicide bombings

Four suicide bombs detonated on 10 October 2013. Five people were killed when a bomb attached to a bicycle detonated close to a police compound in the city of Quetta. One person was killed and 13 persons were wounded in an attack on a restaurant in the city of Lahore. One police officer was wounded in another attack in Peshawar and twelve troops were wounded in an attack in Bannu District (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province).

Men arrested for forcing a family to convert to Islam

Three men were reportedly arrested on 10 October 2013 after forcing a Christian family to convert to Islam at gunpoint earlier this week. The men had broken into the home of a Christian family and tortured them.

Musharraf rearrested in new case following release

Only a day earlier, on 9 October 2013, the Supreme Court had granted former President Pervez Musharraf bail in a separate criminal case. He was arrested again on 10 October 2013. Musharraf has been under house arrest at his villa outside Islamabad since 13 April 2013. His arrest stems from a confrontation at an extremist mosque in which army commandos clashed with heavily armed Islamists inside the building in Islamabad in 2007. The building housed hard-line Koran students who wanted to set up an Islamic state in Pakistan. Their leader was killed in the stand-off.

The release on 9 October 2013 involved the killing of separatist leader Nawab Akbar Bugti, a rebel leader from Balochistan who was killed during a military operation in 2006. Musharraf is to face charges in a case stemming from the assassination of opposition politician Benazir Bhutto in 2007.

Iraq

Bombings

At least 47 people were killed in at least 13 roadside bombings in Baghdad on 7 October 2013. The bombs exploded in front of a restaurant, alongside a road blockade and at a market.

On 10 October 2013, at least 20 people were killed in a number of bombings in and around Baghdad and in Diyala province. At least 14 people were killed when a car bomb exploded in Samarra (Salahaddin province) on 12 October 2013.

At least ten people were killed in suicide bombings in Hilla (Babil province), Kut (Wassit province) and Samawa (Muthanna province) on 13 October 2013.

Army cracks down on insurgents

According to a press report issued on 10 October 2013, Iraqi security forces have been cracking down on insurgents for weeks in large-scale operations.

Parliamentary speaker survives assassination attempt

Iraqi parliamentary speaker Osama al-Nujaifi (a Sunni Muslim) survived a roadside bomb attack unhurt on 9 October 2013. Two of his bodyguards were killed in the blast.

Executions

According to a press release issued on 10 October 2013, government sources say 42 prisoners sentenced to death were executed within the space of one week. All of them were accused of committing "terrorist crimes". At least 132 persons have been executed since the beginning of the year. 129 executions took place in 2012.

Syria

Massacre of Alavites by Islamists

According to a report by Human Rights Watch on 11 October 2013, more than 190 persons, including 57 women and 18 children, have been killed in atrocities in the city of Latakia along the Syrian Mediterranean coast since early August 2013. Ten Alavite villages were reportedly attacked on 4 August 2013, the first day of the Eid-al-Fitr feast (feast of Breaking the Fast) marking the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan. Ten civilians are said to have been slaughtered or taken hostage. More than twenty rebel groups are said to have been involved in the operation, including al-Qaeda affiliates ISIS or ISIL=Islamiq State of Iraq and the Levat and Jabhat al-Nusra as well as the Islamist organisations Ahrar al-Sham, Jeish al-Muhajirin wa al-Ansar and Suqor al-Izz.

Clashes between rival opposition groups

Heavy clashes have been breaking out between the Islamist group ISIS and a batallion belonging to the Free Syrian Army in Aleppo, in the North of Syria since 10 October 2013 in which around 50 people were reportedly killed before 12 October 2013.

SNC cancels participation in peace talks

George Sabra, President of the Syrian National Council (SNC), the largest group within the National Coalition (NC) opposition alliance, announced on 13 October 2013 that his group will not be participating in the peace conference scheduled to take place in mid-November. He said his group will not negotiate before the fall of Assad's regime and that it would quit if the whole coalition participated in the peace talks.

Egypt

Renewed clashes

Clashes have broken out between supporters and opponents of ousted President Mursi in nationwide protests instigated by the Muslim Brotherhood. Thousands took to the streets in protests in front of the presidential palace in Cairo. One person was killed in Sharqia Governorate in the Nile Delta province on 10 October 2013.

Suicide bombings on the Sinai peninsula

Extremist Islamists detonated a car bomb in the city of al-Tur in South Sinai province on 6 October 2013, killing twelve police officers. 27 people were wounded. Four troops were killed when a suicide bomber rammed his car into an army checkpoint south of the city of Al-Arish on 10 October 2013. At least nine soldiers were killed in car bombings on 11 October 2013.

Ethiopia

New President

Mulatu Teshome who had previously served as Ethiopia's Ambassador to Turkey was elected new President on 7 October 2013. Mulatu, like his predecessor Girma Wolde-Giorgis, comes from the Oromo, the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, the office of presidency is a largely symbolic and ceremonial post.

Suicide bombing in Addis Ababa

According to a report issued by the state broadcasting station, two civilians were killed in a suicide bombing on 13 October 2013. However, there is no information available on who is behind the attack. National security forces suspect that the Somali militant group al-Shabab is behind the attack.

Mali

Islamists advancing

On 8 October 2013, Islamist militants shelled the town of Gao in the north of Mali. Seven people were wounded. Shortly afterwards, rebels blew up two bridges over the River Niger between Gao and the border with Niger. These mark the first major attacks since the French military operation was launched in the spring of 2013.

Russian Federation

Security situation

The number of terrorist-related crimes committed in Russia since early 2013 has dropped by almost 50 per cent compared to the same period in 2012 (falling from 270 to 144) according to an announcement made by Alexander Bortnikov, Director of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), in Sochi at a meeting of the National Anti-Terror Committee on 8 October 2013. Bortnikov said comprehensive work has been performed to neutralise underground terrorist organisations and to destroy their organisational core as well as to prevent activities undertaken by random terrorist groups. He said that countless gang leaders had been convinced to quit terrorist activity, 60 terrorist attacks had been prevented and 456 weapons caches had been uncovered and destroyed. Bortnikov said additional measures were being implemented to normalise the situation in the North Caucasus Republic of Dagestan which has borne the brunt of terrorist attacks.

400 protestors held in Moscow

The Russian capital was rocked by some of its worst rioting in years, with clashes erupting between around 1,000 protestors and police officers, sparked by the killing of an ethnic Russian allegedly by a migrant from Central Asia or the Caucasus. Protestors descended upon a shopping centre in the Birjuljovo district of Moscow on 13 October 2013, beating up security guards, chanting xenophobic slogans, breaking shop windows, overturning parked vehicles and throwing bottles, stones and rubbish bins at police officers. The security officers arrested around 400 persons. A police spokesman said five security officers had been wounded. The authorities instituted investigations into hooliganism. According to an AFP photographer, the crowds also raided a neighbouring vegetable market which employs a large number of migrants. Property was also damaged there.

The protestors were seeking revenge for the murder of Yegor Shcherbakov, a 25-year-old Russian man who was stabbed to death in front of his fiancée on 10 October 2013 close to a shopping centre. He was trying to protect her from an attacker. According to media reports, security camera footage shows that the murderer was a man of "non-Slavic appearance", suggesting the killer was a Muslim migrant from Central Asia or the Russian North Caucasus region. The suspect is now at large.

Interior Minister, Vladimir Kolokoltsev promised to take strong action at a meeting with Moscow Police Commissioner Anatoli Yakunin. He has also insisted that the truth about the murder be uncovered swiftly. Ethnically-motivated conflicts have erupted repeatedly in the past in Russia between radical nationalists and migrants.

Serbia

Serbia on the brink of bankruptcy

Serbia which has been an official candidate for membership of the EU since March 2013 is steeped in debt and is on the brink of bankruptcy. The cabinet launched extensive reforms on 8 October 2013 that are to be rolled out in 2014, including increases in VAT, raises in the retirement age for women and civil servants' salaries, state subsidies and other public expenditure.

The country is in need of major reform. The administration is inefficient, a lot of the infrastructure is in poor condition, industry has become obsolete and it is unable to compete on global markets. The weak legal system and corruption are also causing problems. The official unemployment rate is 26 percent nationwide, and 50 percent of the population in the 14 to 30-year-old age bracket are unemployed. The social security system is inadequate. The poverty threshold is around 9 percent and is highest in rural areas and in socially weak groups such as refugees and Roma. In view of the budgetary constraints, the economic situation is expected to continue to deteriorate in future.

Turkey

Supreme Court of Appeals approves convictions of officers

On 9 October 2013, the Supreme Court of Appeals approved the convictions of 237 suspects who used to belong to the military, including high-ranking retired generals who were allegedly planning a coup against the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. At the same time, the Court quashed the convictions of more than 80 other defendants, ordering their release. However, some will face a retrial. The trial involving over 300 defendants dealt with a plotted coup by the military under the alias "Balyoz" (sledge-

hammer) to overthrow Prime Minister Erdogan after his Islamic-conservative AKP won the parliamentary elections in 2002.

Azerbaijan

President Aliyev re-elected

Election officials said a partial count gave Aliyev nearly 85 percent of the vote in the country he has dominated since he became president a decade ago. Around 72 percent of the around five million electorate went to the polls in the presidential elections contested by ten candidates. International election observers said the election fell short of democratic standards. According to a press release, fundamental freedoms have been abused and journalists have been attacked.

Thousands of people took to the streets on 12 October 2013 to protest against the election. They demanded that it be annulled and that Aliyev step down. Police officers responded with force and arrests.

China

Arrests for online activities

Chinese sources reported on 9 October 2013 that more than 100 persons have been arrested in recent weeks in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region for distributing religious-extremist content on the Internet.

Pursuant to a regulation that entered into force on 10 September 2013, any person creating or spreading rumours or for "harming the social order and national interests" that are read by at least 5,000 users or are forwarded at least 500 times can be sentenced to up to three years in prison.

Myanmar

Amnesty for prisoners

On 8 October 2013, 56 political prisoners were released, most of whom belong to ethnic groups of the Kachin and Shan.

President Thein Sein had announced in July that all political prisoners would be released by the end of the year.