

## Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

22 April 2013

### Afghanistan

#### Security situation

On 15 April 2013 eight civilians were killed by a road bomb near the provincial capital of Qalat in the southern province of Zabul. Two staff members of the Red Crescent were shot and two others injured by unknown ambushers in the northern Afghan province of Jawzjan (district of Khanaga) on 16 April 2013. These four staff members of a mobile hospital were travelling in a clearly marked vehicle. In the western province of Herat (near the city of Shindand in the district of the same name) seven civilians died when their vehicle hit a hidden road bomb on 17 April 2013. Four other persons were injured. On the same day the bodies of four soldiers, kidnapped on the previous day, were found with their throats cut in the northern province of Jawzjan. Also on 17 April 2013 a bomb was detected hidden in a dust bin near the parliament in the capital Kabul. No one was hurt. 13 policemen died in an insurgents' attack on the Afghan security forces in the eastern province of Ghazni on 19 April 2013. On 21 April 2013 nine Turkish civilians and their Afghan translator disappeared after their helicopter had to make an emergency landing in the district of Asr in Logar province (south of Kabul), it is assumed that they have been kidnapped by the Taliban. On the same day six policemen were killed and one wounded in an ambush of a police station in Ghazni province. There were three casualties, including a former district governor, in a suicide bombing in the eastern province of Paktika. Reportedly the Taliban cut off one arm and one leg each of two men in Herat province. Presumably the Taliban accused them of working for a company providing logistics support to NATO troops.

ANSO (Afghanistan NGO Safety Office) recorded 2,331 attacks by insurgents in the first quarter of 2013, a 47% increase against the reference period in the previous year. As international troops are withdrawing, 73% of these attacks were aimed at the Afghan military and police. 10% targeted civilians, accused of cooperating with the government and only about 4% were directed against the international military.

#### Afghan government protests potential asylum for local assistants

Last week the government submitted a verbal note to object against any potential offer of asylum to Afghan employees of the Bundeswehr. The same criticism was levelled against other countries providing ISAF troops such as the US, Canada, New Zealand, and France that had adopted a generous attitude in this matter. The Afghan government said that any such offers were unacceptable as they would foster fear, unrest and concern and would demoralize the Afghan population. According to information from the German Ministry of Defence so far 23 so-called local assistants have applied for asylum in Germany.

#### UN report on sexual violence in conflict zones

According to a report of the UN Secretary General („Sexual violence in conflict“ published on 14 March 13) women and children had become victims of sexual violence as a consequence of the conflict in Afghanistan. In the areas that are controlled by the government's opponents there are kidnappings, attacks, rape and sexual abuse. Also other armed groups, such as tribal militia working for the local police, are sexually abusing girls and women. Only rarely are any of the offenders prosecuted if these offences are denounced. Rather, the victims themselves are accused of crimes, stoned or punished in other ways. Such incidents have been reported from the provinces Ghor, Kunduz, Sari Pul, Parwan, and Paktya. Further, there are reports of sexual abuse or threats of such abuse against boys and men held by the secret service or the police.

## **Pakistan**

### **Ex-President and ex-dictator Pervez Musharraf detained**

Former President Pervez Musharraf has been arrested on 19 April 2013. He had seized power in 1999 in a military coup when he was supreme commander of the military. He was president from 2001 to 2008, then resigned and left the country following pressure by the civil society. In March 2013 Musharraf had returned to Pakistan to stand for a seat in during the parliamentary elections, but he was not authorized to stand in any constituency. On 18 April 2013 he followed a summons by the Islamabad High Court. When the court denied any further suspension of detention and ordered his arrest, he managed to escape to one of his farms located in the vicinity with the help of his body guards. On 19 April 2013 Musharraf surrendered to the police on the farm and will have to appear in front of an anti-terrorism court soon. He is facing a number of charges, some in connection with the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and the illegal dismissal of judges during his time in office, and, of course, because of the putsch.

### **Violence against election workers**

In an attack on a campaign event of the Awami National Party in Pishin district (province Baluchistan) on 21 April 2013 two of the participants died and two were wounded.

On the same day armed men attacked a party event of the National Party in the house of its Chairman Dr Malik Baloch in Turbat (province Baluchistan). The attackers withdrew after a fire fight and there were no victims.

A campaign event of an independent candidate in Wana (southern Waziristan; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) was shelled on 19 April 2013. There were two casualties and 25 people were wounded.

## **Iraq**

### **Security situation**

In a series of attacks at least 35 people died and over 250 were injured on 15 April 2013. There were at least 15 fatalities on 16 April 2013. In Wassit province three civilians died in the explosion of a car bomb. Two members of a vigilante committee and two policemen were shot in Baquba (Diyala province). The governor of Ninive province survived an attack on his convoy unharmed. At least four people were killed and 18 injured in Baghdad and its surroundings on 17 April 2013. A bomb attack in the mostly Sunni Baghdad town district of Amariya left at least 27 dead and over 50 wounded on 18 April 2013. On 19 April 2013 the Friday prayers were targeted in mosques in Baquba and Kirkuk, killing eight and wounding 32 people. On 21 April 2013 15 people lost their lives in bombings.

### **Regional elections**

Regional elections were held in twelve of 18 provinces on 20 April 2013. Because of the precarious security situation no elections were held in the provinces Kirkuk, Anbar and Ninive. The vote in the provinces under the administration of the Kurdish Regional Government, i.e. Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniya, is not scheduled until 21 September 2013. Prior to the elections 14 candidates had been assassinated and further incidents occurred on election day. Despite very tight security the extremists succeeded in attacking several polling stations and injuring several people.

According to a dpa news release of 21 April 2013 about half of the electorate participated in the election following official sources. The election committee reported a particularly low voter turnout for Baghdad and Basra. According to preliminary reports only about every third voter cast his or her vote and in the southern port city of Basra (Basra province) not many more.

Almost 8,200 candidates stood for the 447 seats in the provincial councils. 117 of these seats are set aside for women. These were the first elections to be held after the withdrawal of US troops at the end of 2011.

### **Alleged Al Qaeda members executed**

Following official Iraqi announcements 21 members of the terrorist network Al Qaeda in Iraq were executed on 16 April 2013 after having been sentenced for terrorism. They reportedly were responsible for several car bombings, assassinations and kidnappings. So far at least 63 people have been executed in 2013.

## **Syria**

### **Massacre in Damascus suburb reported**

Activists reported on 21 April 2013 that in the course of five days the Syrian army and pro-government militias killed at least 85 people (other reports talk of as many as 250), among them women and children, when storming a Damascus suburb. Many wounded rebels under treatment in makeshift hospitals were executed by pro-government forces.

### **UN Security Council condemns the violence in Syria**

On 18 April 2013 the UN Security Council demanded an immediate end to the violence and condemned the violations of human rights both by the Syrian government and the rebels. The UN estimates that one fourth of the 22 million Syrians is fleeing the violence within their own country, about 1.3 million sought refuge abroad and over 70,000 have been killed.

### **President warns of terrorist groups**

In a TV interview on 17 April 2013 Syrian President Bashar al-Assad warned the west against supporting terrorist groups in Syria. He probably referred to the radical Islamist group Jabhat al-Nusra that is fighting against government troops in several Syrian provinces. In an audio message the group's leader Abu Mohammad al-Golani (Jaulani) had proclaimed his loyalty to Al Qaeda and its leader al-Zawahiri on 10 April 2013, the group already figures on the US' list of terrorist organizations.

### **More assistance for the opposition from abroad**

On 21 April 2013 US Secretary of State Kerry announced the doubling of US aid to about USD 250 million (approx. €192 million) after a meeting of the group of states "Friends of Syria". Although the insurgents will not receive any arms, they will get other type of military equipment such as armoured vehicles, protective vests and night vision gear. Germany plans to increase its aid by €145 million to a total of €135 million. The largest Syrian opposition alliance, the National Coalition, on its part distanced itself from "all kinds of terrorism" among the rebels.

### **EU plans relaxation of sanctions**

The European Union plans to relax the sanctions against Syria in particular with regard to oil. Reportedly discussions are planned on relaxing the arms embargo advocated by France and the UK, but rejected by other EU governments. The embargo runs out at the end of May and would need to be extended unanimously. Prior to a meeting of the EU Foreign Ministers on 22 April 2013 German Foreign Minister Westerwelle voiced reservations against providing the rebels with arms, because of a major risk that these arms might end up in the hands of terrorists.

## **Syria/Jordan**

### **US military presence in Jordan**

According to an announcement of 17 April 2013 the US will transfer army planning staff to Amman. While the overall number of soldiers will not increase more than the currently stationed 200 US soldiers, because other units will be withdrawn, the units deployed will at all times be in the position to coordinate any combat missions. Since last year the US have been training fighters belonging to the "Free Syrian Army" (FSA) on Jordanian territory. By the end of April 3,000 men shall have completed the training. The long-term objective is to establish the FSA in the southern tip of Syria thus creating a buffer to Jordan and Israel to prevent Islamist extremist to gain a foothold there.

## **Egypt**

### **Criminal trial against Mubarak continues**

The trial against Hosni Mubarak that was interrupted after the presiding judge had declared himself biased (see BN of 14 April 2013) will be continued on 11 May 2013 under the presidency of another judge. Muba-

rak will remain under arrest, although the maximum duration of two year pre-trial detention stipulated by law has expired in the trial about the death of several hundred demonstrators and although the court had ordered the conditional release of the former President, because pre-trial detention has also been ordered for corruption proceedings.

### **Injuries during Muslim Brotherhood protest**

A protest by the Muslim Brotherhood against the Egyptian judiciary caused fighting in the streets with radical protesters on 19 April 2013. The Islamists demanded the cleansing of the judiciary which they accused of being infested with counter-revolutionaries. Dozens of participants were wounded during the clashes. The protest had been triggered by the court order to release Mubarak from prison, although this never resulted in any consequences.

Justice Minister Ahmed Mekki, who is considered to be an advocate of the independence of the judiciary, resigned on 21 April 2013, but will continue in office until the appointment of a successor.

## **Libya**

### **Tribal leaders sign peace agreement in Tripoli**

On 20 April 2013 the leaders of the Tebou tribe (Black African) and the Awlad Suliaman (Arab) signed a peace agreement mediated by the Libyan government. Both tribes live in the country's south west in the region of Fezzan around the administrative town of Marzuq. The peace agreement also applies to the population of the city of Sebha. Lately there had been several armed confrontations in the region of Fezzan and in Sebha.

### **FIFA declares Libya safe**

According to an announcement of 19 April 2013 FIFA (International Football Association) declared that the country was safe again and therefore the games for the qualification for the Football World Championships could also take place in Libya. On 07 June 2013 the Libyan national team will meet a selection from the Democratic Republic of Congo in Tripoli and on 14 June 2013 a team from Togo in Benina near Tripoli.

### **Attack on prisoner transport near Tripoli**

Armed men attacked a prisoner transport on 18 April 2013 killing a prisoner and wounding several policemen. The incident occurred about 15 km east of the capital Tripoli on the road to Tajoura.

### **Militias in Gharyan are disbanding**

According to a report of 17 April 2013 the militias in the city of Gharyan in the Nafusa mountains have disbanded. They handed over their equipment including arms, an unofficial prison and 13 men who participated in the crimes committed in Bani Walid (former Gaddafi stronghold) to the state security forces.

### **Leader of the Libyan Ansar al-Sharia is alive**

Recent information states that Sufyan bin Qumu has not been shot in Derna on 14 April 2013. Rather the driver of Qumus' car was seriously injured. Qumu had been an inmate of the US prison camp in Guantanamo Bay and is suspected of involvement in an attack on the US consulate in Benghazi in September 2012 as leader of the Islamist militia called Ansar al-Sharia.

## **Serbia/Kosovo**

### **Breakthrough in Kosovo negotiations**

Following renewed diplomatic efforts of the EU, Serbia and Kosovo finally came to an agreement to end the conflict in Northern Kosovo on 19 April 2013. After the talks had failed in week 16 (see BN of 15 April 2013) the EU had submitted another draft agreement which provides that four villages in Northern Kosovo almost exclusively populated by Serbs will form a community. This community will be vested with extensive rights and powers in law enforcement, justice, health care, and cultural affairs. The community will, however, be funded by the government in Priština. It further provides that the police and the courts in this community must be part of the legal system of Kosovo.

Kosovo's parliament adopted the agreement already today. It is assumed that also a majority in the Serbian parliament will support the agreement and the EU congratulated them on reaching a "historic agreement". UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon called it a milestone. There were, however, also protests and death threats in the countries concerned. The Kosovo Serbs criticized the agreement and announced a referendum. Both Kosovo's and Serbia's opposition say that the agreement is a betrayal of the respective national interests. The main point will now be to see how this agreement is translated into reality.

## **Mali**

### **UN troops to replace France in July**

The planned United Nations peace force for Mali could be deployed after 1 July 2013. The deployment is conditional on the end of "serious fighting" a draft resolution to be submitted to the Security Council states, a copy of which was available to AFP news agency on 15 April 2013. It provides for a strength of 11,200 soldiers for this force.

France has started to withdraw a small part of its troops. Chad also plans to withdraw its troops. Chad's President Deby said that his army was not trained for a guerrilla-type phantom war as was taking place in the north of Mali.

### **Election date confirmed/state of emergency extended by three months**

Mali's Prime Minister Diango Sissoko announced that elections will take place as scheduled in July. The state of emergency declared in January for three months has now been extended until 06 June 2013, the official start of the election campaign. Radio Mali broadcasted on 19 April 2013 that until then major concentrations of people and all activities that might affect public order will be prohibited.

## **Sudan**

### **Tens of thousands flee Darfur**

Aid organizations reported that thousands have fled eastern Darfur since early April to escape the fighting for the cities Labado and Muhagiriya between the Sudanese army and the fraction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA-MM) led by Minni Minawi. According to the joint mission of the United Nations and the African Union in Darfur (UNAMID) the refugees number 18,000, other estimates say 36,000. Since the Sudanese army has recaptured Labados on 16 April 2013 four civilians were killed and six injured, UNAMID reported. The rebels announced their withdrawal from Labado and Muhagiriya. A Nigerian soldier was killed and two were wounded when a UNAMID team was attacked near Muhagiriya on 19 April 2013.

The fighting between the Arab tribes of the Misseriya and the Salamat caused the flight of at least 50,000 people in south western Darfur, according to the United Nations. At least 18 casualties have been reported. Despite the continued violence certain parts of Darfur are relatively stable and there is an opportunity to start reconstruction according to the statements of Marc Cutts, Head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan.

## **Nigeria**

### **Many killed in fighting between Boko Haram and soldiers**

A firefight lasting several hours broke out between government soldiers and members of the Islamist terror organization Boko Haram near Lake Chad in the fishing village of Baga (northeastern state of Borno) on 19 April 2013. Some media reported that the fighting also continued on the next day, claimed at least 185 victims and caused the burning down of about 2,000 houses. Brigadier General Austin Edokpaye stated that a patrol had been attacked near a mosque in Baga on 19 April 2013. Members of Boko Haram had been suspected of staying in the mosque. As a result one officer was killed and several soldiers were wounded. When reinforcement arrived for the soldiers the shootout began and the terrorists used machine guns and anti-tank missiles. Edokpaye blamed Boko Haram for causing so many casualties, because they had been shooting at the soldiers while hiding amongst civilians. The fires had been caused by the terrorist's anti-tank missiles.

The inhabitants, however, said that the soldiers set the houses on fire and caused most of the deaths in this way.

## **Cameroon/Nigeria**

### **Kidnapped French nationals released**

After two months as captives of radical Islamists in Cameroon the kidnapped French family has been released. The government announced that the three adults and four children had been handed over to the Cameroon authorities on 19 April 2013. No further details are known, according to the French President France did not pay any ransom.

## **Uganda**

### **Improved access to the judiciary**

Together with the UNHCR Uganda's government established a mobile court as a pilot project in Nakivale settlement in the south east. This shall provide refugees with better access to the Ugandan legal system. 68,000 refugees and 35,000 locals can benefit from this court. Nakivale extends over 180 sqkm and is Uganda's oldest and largest refugee settlement. The next court is about 50km away.

## **Central African Republic**

### **Difficult situation continues**

The security situation in the capital Bangui remains precarious. The Red Cross informed that several people lost their lives in clashes between citizens and the rebels in Bangui last week. Observers said that this was the heaviest fighting since the ousting of the Bozizé government by the Sékéla rebels on 24 March 2013. In a northern quarter of the capital, Boy-Rabe, that is considered a stronghold of the ex-President, shops are closed down and most people do not dare to leave their houses. The Sékéla rebels are roaming the streets heavily armed. The Africa experts of the GIGA Institute in Hamburg think that the new regime does not have its own troops under control. The United Nations accused the rebels of looting and of using violence against civilians. Archbishop Nzapalainga informed that about 1,400 people fled to a hospital in fear of the rebels. On a recent Sunday armed men had extorted money from all attendants of Sunday mass when they left Bangui cathedral. The Archbishop also said that it might be possible that there are people who wanted to foster tensions between the religious groups.

The UNHCR reported that children are increasingly becoming the victims of this escalation of violence.

On 19 April 2013 the neighbouring countries resolved to send a force of 2,000 soldiers to the Central African Republic.

## **Kenya**

### **Casualties in an attack on a hotel**

When armed men entered a hotel in Garissa in eastern Kenya and opened fire on 18 April 2013 ten people were shot and others wounded. The attackers could escape without being recognized. Kenya has experienced repeated attacks blamed on the Islamist militia al-Shabaab since the country became part of the military mission in neighbouring Somalia.

## **Togo**

### **Teachers' strike; violence during student protests**

Already on 9 April 2013 teachers went on strike for better working conditions and pay. Also the employees of the public health system are striking for the same purpose. On 10 and 11 April 2013 students protested in

Lomé and other places to support the teacher's demands. After the protests in Lomé ended in violence and caused damage to property, the authorities ordered the closure of all public and private elementary and secondary schools in Lomé and Golfe prefecture until further notice on 14 April 2013. Renewed protests broke out in different places on 15 April 2013. During these protests a twelve-year-old student was killed by police warning shots when one of them turned violent in Dapaong (Savanes region). In Barkoissi (Oti prefecture, Savanes region) the Minister for Water, Bissoune Nabagou was injured, by protesting students pelting his car with stones. After the renewed outbreak of violence all schools were closed throughout the country, they are scheduled to reopen on 22 April 2013.

## **Myanmar**

### **Background to violence against Muslims**

In its report published on 22 April 2013 Human Rights Watch accused the authorities of Myanmar and the members of the Arakan ethnic group of crimes against humanity in the form of the "ethnic cleansing" aimed against the group of the Muslim Rohingya since June 2012. The representatives of authorities and communities together with Buddhist monks are accused of organising and inciting Arkanes to exercise coordinated violence against the Muslim communities, to harass them and forcefully resettle them with the tacit support of the security forces. Tens of thousands of displaced persons had been denied access to humanitarian aid and the return to their homes.

Also on 22 April 2013 BBC published a video which the police allegedly made themselves during the latest unrest in Meiktila at the end of March. It shows how policemen stand idly by while the mob is violently attacking Muslims and their possessions.

## **North Korea**

### **Tension continues on the Korean peninsula**

The North Korean leadership has made unacceptable demands for talks with South Korea and the US. According to information of the Ministry of Defence the UN sanctions against North Korea must be lifted. Further the US and South Korea should cancel all joint manoeuvres and guarantee that they were not planning a nuclear war against the North. The official news agency KCNA announced that nuclear disarmament of the Korean peninsula could start as soon as the US had withdrawn their nuclear arms. The South Korean news agency Yonhap quotes military circles as saying that the North Korean forces had transferred two more mobile rocket launching pads to the east coast.