

Group 22 – Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

6 June 2016

Short version due to current staffing constraints

Afghanistan

Drastic increase in number of internally displaced people

UNHCR reports that the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) reached more than a million in 2015. Exact figures are not available since the collection of information is time-consuming. However, the overall trend has continued so far this year. In 2015, the provinces most affected by IDPs were Nangarhar (76.137), Kunduz (50.363), Takhar (39.025), Kabul and Helmand (more than 30,000 each), Badghis and Faryab (more than 20,000). Farah, Badakhshan, Paktya, Wardak, Kapisa, Ghazni, Herat and Ghor recorded more than 5,000 IDPs each; the provinces of Kandahar, Parwan, Khost, Logar, Sar-i-Pul, Balkh and Laghman more than 2,000 each. IDPs are individuals who either were displaced within the province or who have escaped from conflicts in neighbouring provinces (also from Pakistan).

Security situation

Military conflicts, attacks and raids are continuing. Presently, southern Helmand province is worst affected by fights between Taliban and Afghan security forces; here, the Taliban insurgents are in control of five of a total of 14 districts; apparently, at least six districts are fiercely embattled.

In northeastern Kunduz province, at least 13 travellers were killed and more than 130 captured by insurgents on 30 May 2016. Apparently, around 150 hostages have been released meanwhile. A similar incident occurred in northern Sar-e-Pul last week.

Raids on travellers have been occurring on a regular basis for some time now. The main targets are staff of government, of security forces and of international organisations.

Also, targeted attacks on state representatives are continuing. On 5 June 2016, Taliban insurgents shot dead the chief prosecutor of Logar province; in Kabul, a member of parliament was killed in a bomb attack. In both incidents, many more civilians were killed or injured

Biometric technology used by Taliban insurgents?

The Afghan ministry of interior has rejected reports suggesting that the Taliban militants have gained access to the biometric system of Kunduz province which is used to record the personal data of police officers and for the crime record. There is a biometric system in every province and a central one in Kabul, the ministry stated. After raids on travellers in Kunduz (see above), some of the people released said that the Taliban were using the biometric system to identify individuals. The interior ministry rejected these claims as propaganda, saying that the system was secure.

Iraq

Fights in Fallujah

On 30 May 2016, the Iraqi military, supported by the US airforce, started to storm Fallujah and advanced to the city centre. They indicated that they were initially able to liberate four areas surrounding the city from the ISIS insurgents. On 31 May 2016, however, ISIS launched a massive counter-attack. The UN fear that ISIS is using 300-400 families as human shields. To protect civilians, the Iraqi forces have slowed down their advance. On 4 June, the town of Saqlawiyah northeast of Fallujah was retaken. Fallujah (Anbar province) came under ISIS control in January 2014 and is their second largest stronghold after Mosul. Presently, there

are more than 50,000 civilians trapped in Fallujah. The offensive against the city is disputed, since Shiite military forces are taking part in it while the province is mainly inhabited by Sunni Muslims.

Mass grave found near Fallujah

In Saqlawiyah, 10 km northwest of Fallujah, Iraqi security forces found a mass grave containing the remains of about 400 people believed to be victims of ISIS. Apparently, most of the killed were Iraqi soldiers.

Attacks in Baghdad and Saqlawiyah

On 30 May 2016, a new series of attacks struck Baghdad, killing at least 20 people and injuring another 50. The bomb attacks were targeted at a government building and the two Shiite areas of Shaab and Sadr City; a third bomb detonated in the predominantly Sunni suburb of Tarmiya. On 3 June, at least six people were killed and another 23 injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the middle of a group of displaced Iraqis in the town of Saqlawiyah.

Syria

Syrian army crosses into ISIS-held Raqqa province

Supported by massive airstrikes, Syrian troops have launched an offensive on the ISIS-held province of Raqqa and its capital. Their aim is to capture the supply route connecting Raqqa and Aleppo. So far, ISIS insurgents have been able to freely move between their strongholds of Raqqa, Manbidj (northern Syria) and Aleppo (western Syria).

On 4 June 2016, al-Arabiya network reported that the Syrian Democratic Forces alliance (Kurds and their allies) have advanced to Manbidj and cut off the supply route to Raqqa.

Turkey

Readmission agreement suspended

On 29 May 2016, Turkish government representatives told a EU representative in Antalya in the margin of a UN Summit that the agreement between Turkey and the EU allowing for the return of illegal refugees would be halted until the visa liberalisation promised by the EU for Turkish citizens was secured.

The Turkish anti-terror legislation is the main point of dispute with regard to lifting the visa obligation. The EU is demanding more precise wording to prevent government critics having to fear terrorism-related charges.

Curfew declared

On 4 June 2016, the Turkish government declared a curfew in some rural areas around the town of Lice in southeastern Diyarbakir province, ahead of a planned military operation targeting Kurdish militants. On the previous day, the security forces had declared the official end to a three-month operation against the PKK in the towns of Nusaybin (Syrian border) and Sirnak (Iraqi border).

Iran

Man hanged in public

On 05 June 2016, a man convicted of multiple rape was hanged in public in the city of Shiraz.

Morality police detains scores of youths

In the night to 5 June 2016, scores of youths were detained in Tehran and other cities for un-Islamic conduct, i.e. they consumed alcohol at parties, women were not dressed appropriately and unmarried young women and men associated. Normally, these delicts are punished by fine. A week earlier, more than 30 students were given 99 lashes each for similar violations of the public morality code.

Yemen

Fights in Taiz

On 3 and 4 June 2016, pro-government units clashed with rebels in the southern city of Taiz, which is besieged by Shiite Houthi rebels, killing more than 40 people. So far, all peace talks agreed between the counterparties have regularly failed due to the ongoing escalation of the conflict.

United Nations: Humanitarian situation of children is deteriorating

The UN has blacklisted the Saudi Arabian-led military coalition for having caused the death of hundreds of children. The rebels were also blacklisted. A UN report published on 2 June says that the coalition is responsible for 60 percent of the child deaths totalling 785 in Yemen in 2015. Of a list of 762 verified cases of recruitment of child soldiers, 72 percent were attributed to the Houthi rebels, the report went on. Recently, UNICEF had warned that ten million children in Yemen were depending on humanitarian aid, with an estimated 320,000 facing life-threatening malnutrition. So far, UNICEF has received 18 percent of the aid resources needed in 2016 for Yemen.

Palestinian Autonomous Areas

Middle East peace conference in Paris

On 3 June 2016, the representatives of 29 states and international organisations, among them the UN veto powers and the Arab League, assembled in Paris for peace talks. Israel and the Palestinian Authority did not participate in the meeting. The latest French attempt aims at bringing the two conflicting parties back to the negotiation table before the end of the year. The countries and organisation participating in the conference expressed their willingness to assist Israel and Palestinians to return to the negotiating table and to provide meaningful incentives to resume the peace talks that had collapsed in April 2014.

Egypt

Teenager dies after illegal genital mutilation

A 17-year old girl has died in a private hospital in Suez during an operation to remove her genitals. The prosecutor has opened investigations against the female doctor who performed the operation and against the girl's mother who is a nurse. The hospital was closed pending investigations.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is widespread among both Muslims and Christians in Egypt. A staff member of the United Nations Population Fund's Egyptian Office stated that in Egypt, girls typically undergo FGM before reaching the age of 15 (usually between nine and twelve years). There is no information on why the family in question had the operation performed on the victim and her twin sister who survived the operation as late as the age of 17 years.

While FGM was officially banned in 2008 in Egypt, prosecution in these cases is very rare. It was the first time in 2015 that a medical doctor was sentenced to two years in prison for performing FGM on a 14-year old girl who died after the operation. The girl's father was sentenced to a prison term of three months.

Kenya

Refugee camp to be closed by November 2016

On 31 May 2016, interior minister Joseph Nkaissery announced the closure of the Dadaab refugee camp by November 2016 (see BN of 9 May 2016). The decision was final, he added.

Nigeria

Deaths reported at protest rallies

Violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces erupted in several cities in southern and southwestern Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia, Delta, Cross River and Ebonyi States during protests to commemorate the 49th anniversary of the declaration of an independent Republic of Biafra on 30 May 1967.

Official sources report the killing of seven people. Other sources say that at least 30 people were killed in the town of Onitsha (Anambra State).

During the 1960s, ethnic Igbo separatists were striving for an independent Biafra state. After a war lasting from 1967 until 1970, the Republic of Biafra was re-integrated into the Nigerian state.

West Africa/Ebola

Guinea free of Ebola

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared Guinea free of the Ebola Virus again. For 42 days, no new cases have been registered, the WHO stated on 31 May 2016. Already in December 2015, Guinea had been declared Ebola free, but a new outbreak occurred in March 2016.

Somalia

Attack on Mogadishu hotel

On 1 June 2016, a car bomb detonated in front of the Ambassador Hotel in Mogadishu; subsequently, extremists stormed the building and killed at least 16 people, among them two members of parliament. At least 55 persons were injured in the incident. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Al-Shabaab leader killed

On 1 June 2016, the US Department of Defence confirmed the killing of Abdullahi Haji Daud (also known as Yusuf Hagi) on 27 May 2016. Daud was in charge of al-Shabaab's intelligence division (Amniyat) and is believed to be the mastermind behind attacks in Somalia, Kenya and Uganda.

Air strikes claim civilian casualties

On 3 June 2016, air strikes against al-Shabaab bases near Kismayo (Lower Juba region) killed seven civilians and injured eight more.

Journalist shot dead

On 5 June 2016, unidentified gunmen apparently shot dead a woman journalist working for a state radio station in Mogadishu.

Turkish embassy opened in Mogadishu

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has visited Somalia on the third and last leg of his East African tour including Kenya and Uganda. On 3 June 2016, he opened a new Turkish embassy in Mogadishu, which is the largest Turkish representation worldwide. He also signed contracts with the Somali government to deliver training for Somali police forces, among others. This has been Mr Erdogan's third visit to Somalia since August 2011. He announced to come to Somalia again for the opening of a Polytech Institute and a military training facility currently under construction.

Niger

Fights with Boko Haram claim more than 50 casualties

On 3 June 2016, Boko Haram fighters attacked a military camp in Bosso, killing at least 32 soldiers and injuring 67 more. According to the ministry of defence, hundreds of assailants had raided the post and taken control of the city. After a counterattack, the situation was under control again, the ministry said.

The Nigerian army communicated to have started an attack on Boko Haram camps in north eastern Borno State on 3 June. 19 Boko Haram fighters were killed in the clashes, among them the group's regional leader Ameer Abubakar Gana, the statement went on.

Chad/Senegal

Former president of Chad convicted of war crimes

On 30 May 2016, a special tribunal in Senegal issued its verdict in a war crimes trial against Chad's former head of state and military ruler Hissene Habré sentencing him to life in prison. The special tribunal found him guilty of having committed crimes against humanity during his rule between 1982 and 1990. The judges based their decision on testimonies and on documents of the then secret police, confirming that a least 40,000 people had died at the hands of state agents in these years. The victims were either political opponents of the dictator or members of rivalling ethnic groups. This is the first time that a former African head of state accused of human rights violations was brought to justice in another African country. The trial which lasted seven months had come under the jurisdiction of Senegal after the change of government (election of Macky Sall) in 2012 on behalf of the African Union. The judgement is open to appeal and has not yet become final.

Ukraine

Secret service and separatists responsible for torture

According to a UN report, both pro-Russian separatists and the national secret service have been torturing prisoners to extract confessions. In his report of 3 June 2016, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights says that the security service of Ukraine (SBU) is operating several secret prisons. In May, a UN human rights delegation had left Ukraine in protest because it had been denied access to secret service facilities. The delegates had gathered evidence of victims in the territory controlled by Kiev. The former prisoners accused the SBU of using methods like electro shocks, beating and threatening with rape. The accusations were made especially against the SBU, whereas earlier reports had recorded more human rights abuses committed by volunteer battalions. At the same time, the UN report also lists cases of torture and kidnappings carried out by the separatists. In contrary to the people living on government territory, the 2.7 million population in the territories controlled by the separatists is effectively denied basic protection, the report goes on. In the armed conflict, which has been going on in eastern Ukraine since April 2014, more than 9,400 people have so far been killed and more than 21,700 others injured.

Bangladesh

Christian hacked to death

Last week, another Christian was killed by Islamic extremists. Apparently, the victim was a 65-year-old grocer. Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the attack. Just hours before, the wife of a top anti-terror officer was killed, probably because the attackers could not get hold of her husband. Members of the banned Islamic militant group Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) are suspected to have committed the crime.

Thailand/China

Uighur refugees on hunger strike

On 31 May 2016, about 15 of at least 70 Uighurs facing deportation to China went on hunger strike in Thailand. They are protesting against their imprisonment which has been lasting more than two years and against the harsh detention conditions. In July 2015, the Thai authorities had deported approx. 100 Uighur refugees to China (see also BN of 13 July 2015). Again and again, Uighurs from China's Xinjiang province have fled to neighbouring Southeast Asian countries hoping to reach Turkey, which is home to an Uighur minority.