

Group 22 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

19 December 2016

Afghanistan

Armed clashes

Hostilities, raids and attacks, some involving fatalities or injuries among the civilian population, continue to occur. According to press reports, the following provinces were affected in recent weeks: Parwan, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Zabul, Nuristan, Helmand, Balkh, Kunduz, Kabul (Paghman district).

The Afghan Local Police in Kunduz (North-East Afghanistan) are demanding heavy weapons, claiming that they are otherwise unable to combat the Taliban in the province effectively.



Targeted attacks

On 13.12.16 a border police commander and his bodyguard were killed in a bomb attack in Kunar (East Afghanistan). A girl was killed in an attack by insurgents on a bus in Badakhshan (North-East Afghanistan); two people were injured.

Two insurgents died in Kabul on 14.12.16 when their explosives blew up prematurely. One foreigner was shot dead by a guard near Kabul airport and at least two were injured.

Two children were killed in an explosion in Zabul (South-East Afghanistan) on 15.12.16. Three children and one woman were injured. Two suicide bombers were arrested before they had an opportunity to carry out an attack in Nangarhar (South-East Afghanistan).

Five female airport employees were shot dead by unknown assailants on their way to work in Kandahar (South Afghanistan) on 17.12.16.

Taliban executed a mother of two in Badghis (West Afghanistan) on 19.12.16. She had married another man after her first husband went to Iran. On returning, the latter had denounced his wife to the Taliban.

Turkey

Attack in Kayseri

A car bomb attack was launched on a bus carrying soldiers in Kayseri (capital of the province of the same name in Cappadocia, population approx. 1.35 million) on the morning of 17.12.16. At least 14 soldiers were killed and 56 people (including 48 soldiers) were injured. No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack so far. The Turkish government is attributing the attack to the PKK. According to media reports, 15 suspects have already been arrested. In the wake of the incident, attacks on offices of the pro-Kurdish opposition party HDP occurred in several cities. Incitements to murder HDP MPs and party officials are reportedly also circulating in social media. President Erdogan once again described the HDP as an extension of the PKK.

Syria

Withdrawal from Aleppo

With support from the Russian air force and Shiite militias, Syrian government troops last week reclaimed almost total control of the eastern part of Aleppo, which had been held by the rebels since 2012. A ceasefire proclaimed by Russia on 13.12.16 and an agreement on the departure of civilians and rebels initially failed to take effect. Only on 15.12.16 were approx. 1,000 people - a third of whom are presumed to have been fighters - able to leave Aleppo's rebel areas in an initial convoy of buses and ambulances. The evacuation was subsequently interrupted and resumed several times, following isolated skirmishes and an incident in which buses intended for the withdrawal were set on fire in Idlib.

In all, according to media reports some 15,000 people (5,000 fighters plus dependents) have been taken from the rebel areas to the province of Idlib (south-west of Aleppo), which is largely under the control of the armed opposition. The United Nations has stated that it is preparing for the possibility of up to 100,000 fleeing to Idlib.

Libya

Official confirmation that IS has been removed from Sirte

Prime minister Fajes al-Sarradsch announced in a TV address on 17.12.16 that the IS stronghold of Sirte had been liberated and that the military operation was over. He warned that the fight against terrorism in Libya was not yet over, however. IS controlled the city of Sirte for one year.

Government troops launched an offensive to recapture the city in May 2016. From August 2016, the USA supported the offensive with air raids.

Yemen

Aden: Many soldiers killed in suicide attack

An IS suicide bomber blew himself up amongst a group of soldiers at a barracks in the port of Aden in south Yemen on the morning of 18.12.16. At least 49 people were killed and several dozen suffered injuries.

48 soldiers were killed in another IS suicide attack at a barracks on the previous weekend.

Somalia

Attacks

Four people died in an attack on a restaurant in Kismayo on 11.12.16. Ten people were injured. According to witnesses, members of the Somali army were the target for the masked attackers. The attack is being blamed on Al-Shabaab. Suspected Al-Shabaab fighters attacked an AMISOM convoy with several booby traps on 12.12.16. The attack in the town of Mahaday (Middle Shabelle region) claimed the lives of several soldiers. Unknown armed assailants killed a soldier of the Somali army in the area of Qoryooley (Lower Shabelle region) on 12.12.16. The attackers were allegedly members of Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab members killed two election delegates near Harardhere (Mudug region) on 13.12.16. One person was killed and four injured in a suicide attack on a restaurant in Mogadishu on 15.12.16. The attack was aimed at a high-ranking police officer, who was also injured. Five people were killed when a booby trap exploded at a checkpoint outside Mogadishu on 15.12.16.

Hostilities

Around 100 Al-Shabaab fighters briefly seized the town of El Wak (Gedo region) on 11.12.16. Somali soldiers regained control of the town with the support of Kenyan units on 12.12.16. An unknown number of soldiers were killed in an attack by Al-Shabaab on a Somali army base near the city of Qoryooley (Lower Shabelle region) on 14.12.16. Al-Shabaab is particularly active in the area, as Qoryooley is close to the strategically important port of Marka.

Al-Shabaab commander killed

Two civilians reportedly shot dead an Al-Shabaab commander following clashes between residents and Al-Shabaab fighters in the area of Jowhar (Middle Shabelle region). One of the civilians reported to media that the killed commander, who was named as Abdirahman Rahole, had overseen the taking of cattle and money from the population by force. Local police officers welcomed the killing of the commander and called on the population to take up arms against Al-Shabaab.

Ghana

Opposition wins parliamentary and presidential election

Claiming around 54 % of votes cast, Nana Akufo-Addo of the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) won the presidential election on 07.12.16 ahead of incumbent president John Dramani Mahama (approx. 44 %) of the governing National Democratic Congress party (NDC). Five other candidates also ran. The NPP also won the parliamentary election on the same day, taking 171 of 275 seats (NDC: 104). The turn-out in the largely peaceful elections stood at around 69 %.

Gambia

Election result officially disputed

After initially accepting the defeat of long-standing head of state Yahya Jammeh in the presidential elections, his party, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), filed a petition against the election result with the constitutional court on 13.12.16. On the same day, soldiers occupied the headquarters of the national election commission and blocked access to the offices. Chief of general staff Ousman Badjie, who only last week assured the election's winner, Adama Barrow, of his support, told the British Guardian newspaper on 13.12.16 that he was being paid by the current government led by Yahya Jammeh. He explained that it was his job to ensure that the country was peaceful and safe, and that he supported the supreme commander of the Islamic Republic of Gambia to this end as a matter of principle. These comments once again fuel fears that Jammeh might cling to power with the aid of the military. The African Union (AU) called on Jammeh to recognise the election result at an arbitration commission on 13.12.16. In an interview with the British Guardian, the leader of the victorious opposition coalition, Fatoumata Jallow-Tambajang, announced that the new government aimed to put Jammeh in court.

Russian Federation/North Caucasus

At least nine killed in special operation in Chechnya

At least nine people were killed in special operations against unknown armed persons in the Russian autonomous republic of Chechnya in the night of 16.12.16. The head of the republic, Ramsan Kadyrow, a hard-liner loyal to the Kremlin, stated that initially four armed persons were shot dead following an attack on police officers in the capital, Grozny. The authorities assume that further people were involved. Exchanges of fire occurred again on the afternoon of the same day on the outskirts of Grozny. According to the Interfax agency, at least four fighters and one police officer died.

The TASS state news agency linked the suspects to the Islamic State terrorist group. No details or independent confirmation are available to date.

FYR Macedonia

Opposition disputes election result

Following the parliamentary election, the opposition social democrats (SDSM) are disputing the narrow victory by the governing VMRO-DPMNE party, which claimed 38.06 % of the vote (51 seats). The SDSM, which took 36.69 % of the vote (49 seats), has asserted that the government has been voted out of office and that the people have voted for change. The party referred to numerous irregularities, claiming that undue pressure was brought to bear in the ballot, and has submitted an appeal. It has yet to be decided whether a re-run of the election is necessary. A re-run could plunge Macedonia into an even deeper crisis (cf. BN of 12.12.16).

Vietnam

Prison terms for activists

On 16.12.16 a court in the province of Thai Binh sentenced two activists and former members of the military to twelve and 13 years' imprisonment respectively for attempting to form an organisation by the name of National Force the Launch the Democracy Flag with the intention of staging a coup d'état.

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