

## Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

27 May 2013

### **Afghanistan**

#### **Bombings in Kabul**

On 25 May 2013 a Taliban suicide bomber exploded a bomb in front of the interior ministry. Subsequently other fighters tried to take the neighbouring office building that houses the Organisation for Migration (IOM). When the Nepalese IOM guards tried to prevent their entry the attackers entrenched themselves in another building and engaged in an almost ten hour long gunfight with Afghan security forces. The UN informed that at least three IOM staff members and one of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) were injured. Five of the attackers, two Afghan civilians and one policeman reportedly lost their lives in the assault. A Taliban spokesman said that the attack targeted a department of the interior ministry and an accommodation for staff of the US secret service CIA.

#### **Explosion in front of a mosque**

Local authorities in Ghasni province informed that on 24 May 2013 at least twelve people died in an accidental explosion of a Taliban bomb in front of a mosque during evening prayers.

#### **ISAF soldiers engaged in fire fight**

The German Federal Army announced that on 23 May 2013 ISAF soldiers in Baghlan province were shot at with small arms when reconnoitring a road under protection of the German soldiers. One ISAF soldier suffered slight injuries, none of the German soldiers were wounded.

#### **Karzai not standing for re-election**

President Hamid Karzai announced that he would not stand for re-election for a third office term in 2014. According to the constitution he could not seek a third term anyway, but in recent months speculations about Karzai's intentions to amend the constitution surfaced regularly. The elections are scheduled for 05 April 2014.

### **Pakistan**

#### **Balochistan: Bomb attack on police in Quetta**

On 23 May 2013 a roadside bomb exploded in the area of the Eastern Bypass of Quetta (Balochistan province) when a police car drove by, killing twelve members of the Balochistan Constabulary's Rapid Response Force and their driver. Another 16 policemen and 14 passers-by were wounded. The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for the bombing.

#### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Attacks on police:**

Six policemen were killed and two wounded in a militant attack with rocket launchers on the Indus Highway in Mattani area in the town Darra Adam Khel (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) on 24 May 2013. This area is located in the vicinity of the FATA areas. The attack led to a gunfight between the security forces and the militants that lasted well into the night.

## **Iraq**

### **Security situation**

In a series of attacks in Diyala and Salahaddin provinces, among others, at least 21 people were killed on 21 May 2013. At least 90 people are reported wounded, other media reported that 60 were killed and 132 wounded. The attacks targeted mostly Sunni residential areas.

There were at least twelve fatalities in Baghdad on 22 May 2013.

Eleven people died in several attacks on 23 May 2013 including in Baghdad and the provinces Diyala and Salahaddin.

On 25 May 2013 six Iranian pilgrims were killed by a bomb in Salahaddin province.

Seven people died and 16 were wounded in several attacks on 26 May 2013 in Baghdad and Mosul (Ninive province).

AFP news agency reported that so far more than 430 people have been killed in May 2013, making it the second consecutive months with over 400 fatalities. Iraq Body Count puts the number of civilian deaths at 665 (status on 25 May 2013).

## **Syria**

### **Anti-Assad forces call rebels to Kusair**

On 22 May 2013 acting opposition leader George Sabra published an appeal to the rebels, revolutionary battalions and the Free Syrian Army to come to the assistance of the embattled city of Kusair. At the same time he called upon the international community to set up a humanitarian corridor near Kusair on the Lebanese border to ensure the transport of supplies to the population. The pro-rebel Syrian Human Rights Observatory located in London estimates that 25,000 civilians are besieged in Kusair in Homs province. And several thousand more in the surrounding villages are also cut off from supplies.

### **Offensive against rebels**

According to a press report of 27 May 2013 Syrian government troops and Lebanese Hezbollah militia fighters started a new offensive against the insurgents in Kusair last weekend. It is said that about 2,000 Hezbollah militias are involved in the fighting.

### **The government announces participation in the peace conference**

On 26 May 2013 Foreign Minister Walid Moullem announced the government's participation in the peace conference for Syria that is scheduled to take place in Geneva in early June.

## **Iran**

### **Presidential elections: list of candidates released**

On 21 May 2013 the Guardian Council presented the final list of the candidates for the presidential elections on 14 June 2013. Eight candidates were admitted out of almost 700 applicants. Next to five ultra-conservative and two moderately conservative applicants only one political reformer may run in the elections and that candidate is Mohammed Reza Aref.

Thus the Guardian Council, composed of six clerics and six lawyers, stopped the two most controversial candidates short already at this time. Former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani is not allowed to run, nor is Esfandiar Rahim Mashai, the closest associate of the incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. 78-year-old Rafsanjani is considered to be the one politician who would most probably succeed in unifying the reformist camp.

Among those permitted to run are former foreign minister Ali Velayati and the mayor of Teheran, Mohammed Bagher Ghalibaf, as well as Said Jalili, who in his capacity as direct representative of Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Chamenei, is heading the negotiating delegation in the international talks on the country's controversial nuclear programme.

Accordingly eight candidates are running in this election, which are twice as many as four years ago. Some candidates might stand down to improve the chances of other politicians standing for the same policies.

After the release of the names of the admitted candidates security was tightened in Iran. Several additional mobile military and control posts were set up in Teheran. The Revolutionary Guards and the para-military Bassij militias made a strong show of force in all major cities. The election campaign officially started on 25 May 2013 and will end 24 hours before the polls open.

## **Tunisia**

### **Street riots in Tunis**

After violent clashes between the security forces and Salafists on 19 May 2013 the Tunisian government accused the supporters of the Salafist movement Ansar al-Sharia of having ties to terrorism. The rioting that claimed one life and left about 20 wounded, was triggered by the authorities' prohibition of a Salafist Movement conference planned to take place in the city of Kairouan (about 150 km south of Tunis). The conference was prohibited for security reasons. When the ban became known, Ansar al-Sharia called a rally in Ettadhamen (western borough of Tunis) that is considered to be a stronghold of that organisation. This is where the rioting first broke out before spreading to the neighbouring borough of Intilaka. Smaller clashes were reported from Kairouan.

On 19 May 2013 the protesters had set up road blocks of burning tires in Tunis and thrown stones and petrol bombs to which the security forces responded with tear gas and rubber bullets. The police arrested a total of 200 persons. Ansar al-Sharia supporters are also held responsible for the attacks on the US embassy in September 2012 and on TV stations and art exhibitions they consider to be "too western". Allegedly this was their response to a defamatory video of Mohammed from the US and the broadcasting of a movie considered blasphemous.

## **Libya**

### **New interior minister confirmed**

On 26 May 2013 the General National Congress confirmed the appointment of Mohamed Khalifa Al-Sheikh as the new Interior Minister. He is the successor of Ashour Shuwail who had submitted his dismissal two weeks ago. Al-Sheikh is known for his good relations with the Revolutionary Brigades and is said to have participated in the uprising. Although he was a policeman and trainer at a police academy already in Gaddafi's times, he is said to have been responsible for the operations of the revolutionary movement in the greater Tripoli area after the fall of that city. His main task will be to get control of the revolutionary militias.

### **EU commits to send security advisors**

On 22 May 2013 the EU governments resolved to support Libya in securing its borders by deploying a team of 110 civilian advisors. One of their tasks will be to help stop the movement of arms and of Islamist militants.

### **Benghazi: Armed group arrested/journalist kidnapped**

On 22 May 2013 Libyan special forces advanced on a base of an armed group in Benghazi arresting suspects and seizing explosives and parts for arms. One soldier was wounded during the operation.

On 21 May 2013 AFP reporter Ibrahim Hadiya was kidnapped by armed men in the Benghazi borough of as-Sabri. Hadiya was accompanied by his brother who remained unharmed.

### **Armed men attack oil and gas facility in Mellitah**

On 20 May 2013 a group of armed men attacked the oil and gas processing plant in Mellitah (west of Tripoli near Zuwara). Two guards were injured and the attackers fled with a loot of arms and up to 20 military vehicles. The installations were not affected.

## **Niger**

### **Islamist attacks**

In attacks on a uranium mine in Arlit and a military camp in Agadez more than 20 people lost their lives on 23 May 2013. The attackers took several trainee officers hostage, therefore French special forces intervened at the request of the government of Niger on 24 May 2013. The Islamist group Al Qaeda in Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for the attacks, the same group had been responsible for taking the hostages at an Algerian gas facility earlier this year. The group published a declaration on the internet stating that these attacks were in retaliation for the use of troops from Niger against Islamists in Mali. The statement also included threats of further attacks in this West African country. It said that the war would be extended to Niger, if the government would not withdraw its mercenaries from Mali. They also threatened France and other countries involved in the military mission in neighbouring Mali with attacks.

## **Guinea**

### **Unrest ahead of the elections in Guinea**

Prior to the elections that have been delayed several times and are now scheduled for 30 June 2013 the police clashed seriously with anti-government protesters in the capital of Conakry. It is reported that 15 people have lost their lives and dozens have been injured in the unrest since 23 May 2013.

## **Togo**

### **Protests after opposition member dies**

Dozens of supporters of the opposition alliance CST (Collectif Sauvons le Togo) and Arc-en-ciel protested against the death of the opposition member Etienne Yakanou in prison and for the release of other members of the opposition in Lomé on 18 and 21 May 2013. According to several reports mostly women clad in red were protesting on 21 May 2013. Official sources stated that Yakanou had been afflicted by malaria and died of heart failure on 10 May 2013. The opposition accused the authorities of insufficient medical care for the prison inmates. Yakanou was one of a number of opposition members who had been arrested after fires had burnt down the markets in Kara and Lomé in January 2013.

The authorities prohibited two protests planned to be held in Lomé on 22 and 23 May 2013. On 23 May 2013 the security forces used force against protesters who ignored the ban.

## **Nigeria**

### **Success in fight against Boko Haram**

Since a state of emergency has been declared for the north-eastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa on 14 May 2013 Nigeria's army has started its largest ever military offensive against Boko Haram. According to military statements they succeeded in liberating three women and six children when taking three Boko Haram camps in the area of the Sambisa forest in Borno state. They had been kidnapped on 07 May 2013 in the village of Bama in retaliation for an alleged arbitrary arrest of women and children of Boko Haram members by the security forces. Two other children and one woman who had also been kidnapped in Bama are still missing.

## **Democratic Republic of Congo**

### **New fighting near Goma**

For the first time since the M23 rebel's withdrawal from Goma (capital of the eastern province of North Kivu) on 01 December 2012 fighting broke out again between the government army FARDC and the M23 rebels in the area of Goma from 20 to 22 May 2013. 21 rebels and soldiers died in the fighting. Six rockets hit the densely populated western residential areas Mugunga and Ndosho in Goma killing one child and seri-

ously wounding 16 people. Fighting ceased while UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon visited Goma on 23 May 2013. On 25 May 2013 the rebels announced that government soldiers had attacked them north of Goma in Kibumba and Kanyamahoro, which was denied by the military.

On 10 May 2013 the first units of the "intervention brigade" were stationed in Goma, at this time without carrying any arms. The UN Security Council had adopted a resolution on 28 March 2013 to set up this brigade (almost 3,000 men) with the mandate to fight armed groups in Eastern Congo. Since the new UN intervention force's mandate is mainly directed against M23, observers assume that the outbreak of renewed fighting is related to the stationing of the first troops in Goma and Ban Ki Moon's visit.

## **India**

### **Numerous fatalities in Maoist assault**

About 250 Maoist rebels ambushed a convoy with politicians and supporters of the Congress Party in the region of Bastar in the state of Chhattisgarh on 25 May 2013. At least 24 people were killed, including Nand Kumar Patel, the state's party leader and Mahendra Karma, the founder of the militant anti-Maoist movement Salva Judum. About thirty people were injured. The Congress Party controls the national government, but is in the opposition in the state of Chhattisgarh.

## **Myanmar**

### **Birth restrictions for Rohingya in Rakhine State**

As became known last week the authorities decreed a limitation of the number of births for Muslim Rohingya for the two communities Buthidaung and Maungdaw in Rakhine State. According to the government order Rohingya families may not have more than two children and polygamy is also outlawed. The reason given is that the birth rate of Rohingya families was extremely high compared to that of the Buddhist population. It was not said how this order, that dates from the times of the military junta, but had not been enforced, is to be implemented. Most of the Rohingya are officially considered to be illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangla Desh. In June and October 2012 violence between Muslims and Buddhists had claimed almost 200 lives in this region.

## **China**

### **Violent outbreak in Xinjiang**

On 25 May 2013 a skirmish between Han Chinese and Uyghurs occurred on the bazaar of the city of Kargilik (Chinese Yecheng) in Kashgar prefecture in the Autonomous Uyghur Region of Xinjiang. According to unconfirmed eye witness reports at least three Uyghurs and two Han Chinese died. No details are known, because, as is usual during such incidents, the authorities try to contain all information.