

Information Centre on Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

7 January 2013

Pakistan

Attacks in the provinces Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Belujistan

On 4 January 2013, unknown attackers shot two employees of the al-Khidmat Foundation, which is backed by the Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami. The two victims wanted to visit a school run by the foundation in Uthmanzai near Charsadda (province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

On 1 January 2013, unknown attackers fired at the vehicle of an undersecretary of state of the Belujistan government in the area of Besima (Kharan district). Both the undersecretary and his driver were killed. The police believe this to have been a targeted attack. On the same day, a prison officer in Machh Bazar (Belujistan) was shot by unknown attackers. The victim belonged to the Hazara minority.

On 1 January 2013, a roadside bomb explosion near Miranshah (Fata agency northern Waziristan, province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) killed a civilian employee of the Frontier Works Organisation and seriously injured four security officials. The Frontier Works Organisation is the research and engineering unit of the Pakistani army, but also runs civilian large-scale construction projects for the government.

On 5 January 2013, the Jaffa Express from Rawalpindi was attacked near Machh Bazar (Belujistan). Four people were killed and ten injured. One of the casualties was a member of the Frontier Corps. The perpetrators are still unknown.

Pakistani Taliban leader killed

On 2 January 2013, Mullah Nazir, a leader of the Pakistani Taliban, and some of his followers were killed in a UAV attack in the area of Sar Kanda in southern Waziristan (province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

From the vantage point of the Pakistani government Mullah Nazir was a “good Talib”¹, as he had evicted foreign militants from northern Waziristan and did not attack Pakistani security forces. Nazir’s followers only conduct attacks in Afghanistan. Nazir was reported to have links to the terror network of the Haqqani family and to al-Qaeda. Most recently, he was in the headlines because he evicted the members of the Mehsud clan from his area after an attempt on his life. Pakistani security forces reportedly fear that Nazir’s death might strengthen the TTP (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan). So far, Nazir actively and effectively controlled his area, which is why no TTP activity was possible there.

Bomb attack on MQM party rally in Karachi

On 1 January 2013, a remotely triggered bomb exploded in the Federal B Area, Aisha Manzil in Karachi (province of Sindh). It killed attendants of a public rally of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) party after the conclusion of the event. Four people were killed and forty-seven injured, with some of the victims being MQM members. The Pakistani Taliban are reported to have claimed responsibility for the attack.

¹ The Pakistani security authorities classify the Taliban as “good” or “bad”, even though they usually do not do so in public. The “good” Taliban are those who fight against foreign troops and Afghan security forces in Afghanistan only. They are tolerated and to some extent supported. The “bad” Taliban are those who also attack the Pakistani government and its representatives. The government actively fights them. Both factions, however, belong to the illegal umbrella organisation TTP.

India / Pakistan

Incident in Kashmir²

A gunfire border clash is weighing on the relationship between the two enemies India and Pakistan. Pakistan claims that Indian soldiers crossed the line of control (i.e. the de-facto border) in the area of Haji Pir on 6 January 2013 and attacked the military post of Sawan Patra on the Pakistani side. Reportedly, one Pakistani soldier was killed and another seriously injured. India refused these allegations and claimed that it was Pakistan which had violated the ceasefire and that the Indian soldiers had only returned the fire.

India

Suspected rapists on trial

On 7 January 2013, the charges are to be presented against five defendants who are suspected to have raped and seriously injured a 23-year-old-woman in a bus in New Delhi three weeks ago. The men are accused of murder, rape and kidnapping. Then, the case is to be sent to a new fast-track court. The quick procedure is very unusual and was probably triggered by nationwide protests after the crime.

In 2012, 24,000 rape complaints were filed. In New Delhi alone, more than 600 cases were reported in 2012. And the dark figure is a multiple of that. Despite numerous arrests, only one rapist has been sentenced so far.

Iraq

Suicide bomber kills Shiite pilgrims

On 3 January 2013, a suicide bomber killed at least 27 Shiite pilgrims and injured at least 60 others in Mussayab (province of Babil). So far, nobody has claimed responsibility for the attack.

First female prisoners released

On 1 January 2013, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki announced that more than 700 female prisoners were to be released. According to a press release dated 3 January 2013, eleven women have indeed been released and 13 others transferred from Baghdad to prisons in their home provinces of Salahaddin, Niniveh and Anbar.

Protesters calling for reforms

According to a press release dated 4 January 2013, thousands of people have demonstrated for reforms and the release of innocent prisoners. Large demonstrations took place in Baghdad, Ramadi, Tikrit, Samarra, Mosul and Kirkuk. Reportedly, most of the participants were Sunnis who criticised Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Al-Maliki threatened to terminate the protests by force; the demonstrations have gone on for 15 days now.

Condition of the Iraqi president stable

According to press reports, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani is in stable condition. After a stroke on 18 December 2012 he has been in Germany for treatment for three weeks now.

Syria

² Both Pakistan and India claim the Himalayan region of Kashmir as their own; the area is mainly inhabited by Muslims. The two countries have gone to war over the area three times since their independence from the United Kingdom in 1947. In November 2003, they signed a ceasefire for the Kashmir region. While the agreement is largely adhered to, both sides occasionally violate it. Casualties are rare, however.

Speech by the Syrian President

According to press reports, Bashar al-Assad refused any cooperation with his adversaries in his first public speech in months. He promised political reforms, a new constitution and government and the release of prisoners. He mentioned one precondition for a political solution, namely, that the west and the Arab countries stopped to support the “terrorists”.

Bombing of a petrol station

The opposition claims that a bombing of a petrol station in Damascus on 3 January 2013 killed at least eleven people and injured 40 others. So far, it is not clear who is responsible for the attack.

Fights for airports

According to a press release dated 3 January 2013, the fights for the military airport Taftanas (province of Idlib, near the Turkish border) are continuing. According to the rebels, two Islamist brigades participated: the al-Nusra front, which is classified as a terrorist organisation by the US, and the Ahrar al-Kham. In the night of 2/3 January 2013, government troops and rebels allegedly fought for the Aleppo airport, too.

More than 60,000 dead in the Syria conflict

According to press releases dated 2 January 2013, the United Nations believe that 60,000 people have been killed in the conflict in Syria so far. The London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says that more than 46,000 people have died so far.

Turkey

Prison sentences for militant Kurds

On 3 January 2013, a Diyarbakir jury sentenced 40 Kurdish defendants to prison sentences ranging from three months to 17 years for membership in the KCK (Union of Communities in Kurdistan) and membership of a terrorist organisation. The defendants were arrested in 2009 during a major police raid in connection with a crackdown on the Koma Civakên Kurdistan (KCK), which is suspected of having ties to the PKK. These are the first judgements in a series of trials started after the mass arrests in 2009.

Former Chief of Staff arrested

On 3 January 2013, former Chief of Staff Ismail Hakki Karadayi was arrested on suspicions of being involved in the military coup of 1997. The retired general was questioned by a court in Ankara and then released. According to media reports, a general who was under his command back then accused him of having ordered military personnel to categorise politicians, intellectuals, soldiers and officers by their religious convictions. The proceedings against Karadayi are part of the investigation against military officers who allegedly forced the first Islamist Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to resign in 1997. A number of retired officers were already arrested in April 2012 in connection with these investigations.

Libya

Attack on the president of the General National Congress

On 5 January 2013, there was an attack on the hotel in Sebha where Mohamed Magarief, president of the General National Congress (Libya’s parliament), stayed. Several bodyguards were injured in the three-hour gunfight. Magarief is currently the highest-ranking representative of the government; in addition to his office as parliamentary speaker, he is, in fact, also the country’s president.

Tribe clashes in Sebha/Benghazi chief of police kidnapped

On 2 January 2013, armed members of the Qadhadhfa and the Awlad Suleiman tribes clashed in Sebha (the administrative centre of the inland province with the same name). Four Qadhadhfa members were killed and a number of people were injured. A Magarha member who tried to help the victims was injured as well.

Muammar al-Gadhafi belonged to the Qadhadhfa tribe, too. The army reportedly has the situation under control by now.

On 2 January 2013, Abdulsalam al-Mihdawi, the newly appointed head of the Benghazi Criminal Investigation Department (CID), was kidnapped on his way to work in Benghazi by unknown, armed attackers in the Hawari district. The perpetrators are believed to be Islamists. Nasser al-Moghrabi, a CID employee who had been kidnapped before, was found dead in the quarter Sidi Faraj (Benghazi); he had been shot in the head.

Mali

Islamists suspend ceasefire

As reported only now, the Islamist rebel group Ansar Dine suspended the ceasefire with the government in Bamako in a statement dated 26 December 2012. The rebels claimed that the government was not really interested in peace talks, but preparing for war. In a “political platform”, which was available to the news agency AFP on 4 January 2013, Ansar Dine did not demand a separation of the northern part of the country, but called for far-reaching autonomy and the introduction of Sharia law. It is doubtful whether the talks between Ansar Dine and the government of Mali, which mediator Burkina Faso had scheduled for 10 January 2013, will indeed take place.

Nigeria

Boko Haram

On 3 January 2013, unknown attackers raided a police station and a local government administrative office in the city of Song in the north-eastern state of Adamawa (near the Cameroon border). A soldier, a policeman and two civilians were killed and the buildings destroyed. According to army reports, armed perpetrators had attacked an army post in the remote city of Marte (north-eastern state of Borno) one day before. One soldier, one policeman and five of the attackers were killed in the gunfight. Members of the Islamist Boko Haram organisation are suspected to be behind the two incidents.

According to an army spokesman, the specialist Joint Task Force for the fight against Boko Haram attacked the Islamists in different parts of Maiduguri (the capital of the state of Borno and a stronghold of the group) on 1 January 2013. 13 Boko Haram fighters and one soldier were killed.

Uganda

Proceedings against theatre producer dropped

The charges against British theatre producer David Cecil were dropped on 2 January 2013. Cecil had been arrested on 13 September 2012 because he had staged a play about homosexuality without the necessary official authorisation. On 17 September 2012, he had been released on bail; he faced up to two years in prison if convicted.

The Ugandan parliament is currently discussing a controversial bill which foresees stricter punishments for homosexuality. In mid-December 2012, the debate was postponed to February 2013 at the earliest.

Myanmar

Kachin conflict escalates

Since the end of December 2012, the armed conflict between the KIA (Kachin Independence Army, part of the rebel organisation KIO (Kachin Independence Organisation)) and the army has been escalating. The Kachin rebels accuse the army of having used fighter planes for the first time in an offensive against rebel positions. A government spokesman said on 2 January 2013 that the government was still interested in peace

negotiations. On 3 January 2013, the government called on the army and the rebels to agree to a ceasefire. According to observers, the recent developments raise doubts about the government's being able to control the military and might be an obstacle to the reform process started by President Thein Sein. The ceasefire in Kachin (a northern state with borders to China), which had held since 1994, ended when fights erupted again in June 2011. Since then, about 75,000 people have been displaced. So far, talks between the government and the rebels have not yielded any results.