

Directorate 22 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

7 April 2015

Afghanistan

Security situation

Numerous security incidents, such as bomb blasts or attacks by government opponents, took place during the past week. Civilians were also among the victims. A suicide bombing in Khost (a city in the south-east) on 2 April 2015 stood out, with at least 20 people dead and more than 60 injured.

On 6 April 2015, eight policemen and two civilians were killed in attacks in Kabul and in the northeastern province of Baghlan.

In addition, attacks on security officials, raids and military operations, during which civilians were killed or injured, took place in the southern provinces of Helmand and Zabul, in Ghazni and Paktia in the southeast, in the eastern province of Nangarhar, in Faryab and Sar-e Pol in the north, in Badakhshan and Kunduz in the north-east, in Jawzjan in the north, Farah in the west, in Maidan Wardak and Logar (central Afghanistan) and in Kabul (in the district of Qarabagh).

Pakistan

Security situation

According to a report by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, the number of terrorist attacks declined by 23% month-on-month in March. Nationwide, 100 people were killed and 162 injured in 63 terrorist attacks. Increased security force activities since the attack on an army school in Peshawar in December 2014 are thought to be a key reason for the lower number of attacks. In March, the security forces conducted 97 operations, during which 230 people (most of them insurgents) were killed, 43 injured and 667 arrested.

Iraq

Reprisals after Tikrit recapture?

With some support from the US air force, Iraqi soldiers and Shia militia retook the Sunni city of Tikrit (about 160 km from Baghdad) from Islamic State (IS) on 1 April 2015. Afterwards, Shia militia allegedly ransacked buildings and set them on fire. Moreover, numerous human-rights violations are said to have taken place; for example, people in custody are said to have disappeared or to have been court-martialled and shot. Army officers have denied that the army was involved in these incidents. The recapture of Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's birthplace, was regarded as a test of whether the army, which largely consists of Shia soldiers, would abstain from reprisal if they retook Sunni areas.

Turkey

Twitter and YouTube temporarily blocked

On 6 April 2015, the Turkish prosecution authorities temporarily blocked Twitter, YouTube and Facebook when photos of a prosecutor who had been taken hostage and killed last week were posted. The Facebook ban was lifted shortly afterwards, as the pictures were removed. By now, the two other internet portals are back on-line, too. On 3 April 2015, the Turkish president had signed a law which, among other things, permits stricter internet controls.

Series of attacks and arrests

On 31 March 2015, leftist extremists took a prosecutor hostage at a courthouse in Istanbul. The prosecutor headed the inquiry in a politically difficult case, the death of 14-year-old Berkin Elvan, who was on his way to the baker's when he was hit by a police tear gas canister during the Gezi protests in summer 2013 and died after nine months in a coma. The prosecutor and his kidnappers were killed during the police rescue operations. The DHKP-C (Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi, Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front) claimed responsibility for the attack; the DHKP-C is considered as a terrorist organisation by the EU and banned in Turkey. On 1 April 2015, numerous suspected DHKP-C members were arrested and charged with having planned similar actions.

On 1 April 2015, armed intruders into an office of the Muslim, conservative government party AKP were arrested. Also on 1 April 2015, an armed person who allegedly carried a bomb was killed during a shootout in the centre of Istanbul. She is said to have been on her way to the police headquarters.

Syria

Government loses last border checkpoint to Jordan to rebels

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on 1 April 2015 that rebels supported by the Islamist al-Nusra Front took the border crossing at Nasib, the last border crossing to Jordan held by the Syrian army. The government army retreated and Jordan closed the border crossing due to the fights.

More than 200 Kurds kidnapped and released

According to the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), Islamist rebels kidnapped more than 200 Kurds (initially, some 300 were said to have been taken) in the evening of 5 April 2015. The reports said that the victims were travelling home by bus to the Kurdish enclave around the city of Afrin. According to the reports, they were exchanged against three prisoners held in Afrin who had been arrested on the grounds of unauthorised archaeological digging.

Large parts of Palestinian refugee camp Yarmouk controlled by IS

On 1 April 2015, IS fighters seized control of large parts of the Palestinian refugee camp Yarmouk (about 8 km from the city centre of Damascus) after fights with Palestinian militia. Before the civil war, about 160,000 Palestinian refugees from Israel lived in the camp. Since end-2012, most of them have fled. According to UN reports, 18,000 civilians were trapped inside the camp and besieged by the government army. About 2,000 Palestinians are said to have left the camp on 3 and 4 April 2015.

IS explodes church

On 5 April 2015, IS militia members allegedly blew up an 80-year-old church in the village of Tel Nasri in the northeast of the country. In the past, IS fighters have already destroyed several Shia and Sufi religious sites and attacked churches.

Yemen

Battle for Aden continues

According to UN reports, more than 500 people were killed during the fights in the past two weeks. Supporters of President Hadi, who has fled the country, defend Aden in southern Yemen in a fierce battle against Houthi rebels. According to aid agencies, supplies and utilities for the population are no longer secure. Observers and analysts are afraid that the current power struggle might lead to religious conflict. The Shia Houthis represent about 30% of the population and live only in the north, while the people in the south are Sunni Muslims.

Libya

Seven killed in suicide attack

On 5 April 2015, a suicide bomber exploded himself in a car in the port of Misrata. The Libyan News Agency (Lana) reported that seven people were killed and at least 20 injured. A control checkpoint of the security forces was the target. The IS claimed responsibility via its radio station al-Bayan.

Egypt

Violence on Sinai and in Cairo

According to police reports, 15 soldiers, two civilians and 15 attackers died in attacks by Islamists (suspected to be affiliated to IS) in the north of the Sinai peninsula on 2 April 2015.

A bomb explosion in Cairo killed at least one person on 6 April 2015. A group called Ajnad Misr said it had carried out the attack. Security officials claim that the group's leader was shot dead in an apartment in Cairo in the evening of 6 April 2015.

New trial against Mubarak

On 4 April 2015, a new trial against former president Hosni Mubarak and his sons started in Cairo; they are charged with having diverted more than EUR 12 million. In May 2014, all three defendants had already been sentenced to three or four years in prison on the same grounds. However, the Court of Cassation upheld an appeal against the sentence and ordered a retrial. On 3 April 2015, a second trial against Mubarak was opened which will deal with the death of more than 800 demonstrators shortly ahead of Mubarak's fall from power in 2011. Mubarak had initially been sentenced to life imprisonment on these charges, but been acquitted afterwards.

Ivory Coast

Death penalty deleted from the criminal code

While the death penalty had already been officially abolished in the Constitution of 2000, this amendment had not yet been included in the criminal code. This oversight has been amended now.

Chad

Former policemen sentenced

On 25 March 2015, a court sentenced ten former policemen to life in prison or hard labour for torture. The defendants belonged to the Documentation and Security Directorate, which ousted dictator Hissene Habré (1982 – 1990) used to torture and kill thousands of people. Habré has been held in Senegal since 2013; he is to be tried by a special court of the African Union.

Senegal

Court sentence

A court sentenced Karim Wade, the son of former president Abdoulaye Wade, to six years in prison and a fine of USD 230,000 for corruption and illegal enrichment during the 12 years of his father's rule. Karim

Wade is the presidential candidate of the opposition party PDS (Parti Démocratique Sénégalais) and headed the ministries with the largest budgets (development cooperation, aviation, land use, infrastructure and energy) during his father's time in office.

Kenya

Attack on university claims many lives

About 150 people were killed and dozens injured in an attack on a university in the city of Garissa (about 150 km from the border to Somalia) on 2 April 2015. Four attackers killed mainly non-Muslim students, took hostages and entrenched themselves on the campus. After a siege of several hours, the attackers blew themselves up. Five suspects were arrested. The Somali al-Shabab militia took responsibility for the attack and threatened further assaults. It was the bloodiest attack in Kenya since the bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi in 1998, which claimed more than 200 lives.

Somalia

Kenyan strike against al-Shabab

The Kenyan army said it had retaliated after the al-Shabab attack on the university of Garissa. On 5 and 6 April 2015, air raids against two terrorist training camps in the Somali region of Gedo took place.

Nigeria

Opposition candidate Buhari wins presidential elections

On 31 March 2015, the Nigerian electoral commission announced the final result of the presidential elections held on 28 and, in parts of the country, 29 March 2015. Former military dictator Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim from northern Nigeria, will be the new president. He gained about 54% of the vote. Incumbent Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from southern Nigeria, won about 45%. He admitted his defeat on 31 March 2015 and called on his supporters to accept the election result. Contrary to concerns ahead of the elections, there was no unrest after the result was announced. The handover is scheduled for 29 May 2015.

Violence against APC officials in the state of Rivers

In the evening of 3 April 2015, unknown attackers shot Christopher Adube in his home in the city of Obrikom (Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area – LGA) in the southern state of Rivers. Adube was a former LGA chairman and a high-ranking official of Buhari's APC (All Progressives Congress) party. Four of his children, his driver and two other persons were killed together with him. In addition, the home of Vincent Ogbagu, the APC candidate to the parliamentary elections, was set on fire. In the evening of 4 April 2015, Jonathan Okwu Osia, another high-ranking APC member, was shot at his home in Egbada in the same LGA.

Villagers shot by Boko Haram

In the evening of 5 April 2015, Boko Haram fighters who passed themselves off as Muslim preachers appeared in the remote village of Kwajaffa (LGA of Hawul) in the state of Borno. They asked the villagers to assemble in front of a mosque. Then they shot at least 24 people, injured several others and burned buildings.

Malam Fatori reconquered

The Chadian army reported that Chadian and Niger troops retook the city of Malam Fatori near the border to Niger on 31 March 2015. This was one of the last Boko Haram strongholds in the region. Before the terrorists fled, they burned down the city.

Georgia

Tens of thousands demand that government step down

On 21 March 2015, one of the largest demonstrations in years took place, with tens of thousands protesting against the government of Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili. Georgia is suffering from an economic crisis, inflation and rising unemployment. During the last two years, the currency has lost one-third of its value. The government is also accused of corruption, and the demonstrators protested against what they saw as the government's pro-Russian policy. They are afraid that Georgia might be the next target of Putin's imperial strategy.

Ukraine

Six Ukrainian soldiers killed in the east

On 5 April 2015, six Ukrainian soldiers lost their lives in a military vehicle in the eastern part of the country. It is not clear whether separatists had fired on the vehicle. The separatists claim that the vehicle hit a mine.

Thailand

Martial law lifted

On 1 April 2015, ten months after the coup by the military junta, martial law was lifted. It was replaced by a number of security laws, which give the army significant powers. Article 44 of the interim constitution, which entered into force on 1 April 2015, gives the army almost unlimited power to push through security laws. For example, it may arrest people, censor the media and ban all criticism of the royal family. Political gatherings are still forbidden.

Malaysia

New anti-terror law

On 7 April 2015, the parliament defied vehement criticism by the opposition and by human-rights activists and adopted an anti-terrorism bill which reintroduces indefinite detention without trial.

On 6 April 2015, the police announced that 17 terrorist suspects had been arrested, among them two returnees from Syria. They are charged with having planned terrorist attacks in Kuala Lumpur.