

Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

28 July 2014

Afghanistan

Security situation

On 18 July 2014 about 300 insurgents attacked several police check points in the northern province of Faryab. Eight policemen and 28 Taliban fighters died in the fighting that continued until 21 July 2014.

On 21 July 2014 a suicide bomber detonated his explosive-laden car next to a police convoy in the southern province of Helmand, killing at least one civilian and one policeman and wounding about 15 people. In a separate roadside bombing three soldiers were killed.

On 22 July 2014 another suicide bombing happened in Kabul claiming the lives of four foreigners and wounding several people. The attack was apparently aimed at an accommodation for foreign government consultants located near the airport. The assassin was reportedly wearing a police uniform. Three Nepalese guards were among the victims.

On 24 July 2014 a suicide bomber blew himself up on a market in Khwaja Ghar (capital of the district of the same name in the north-eastern Afghan province of Takhar). Reportedly the bomb was meant for a police car, but missed its target killing six civilians and wounding 26 instead.

In the city of Herat in western Afghanistan two Finnish women were shot by unknown gunmen also on 24 July 2014. The women had been working as psychiatrists for an international aid organisation.

15 civilians (eleven men, three women, and one child) were shot by unknown gunmen in the province of Ghor in western Afghanistan on 24 July 2014. The attackers had stopped the car and forced everybody out. Reportedly all of the victims were ethnic Hazara. The Taliban deny any involvement and denounced the ambush.

Fighting between the Taliban and the Afghan security forces has been reported from the provinces of Khost, Kandahar, Helmand, and Parwan in the last two weeks claiming the lives of 31 Taliban fighters and seriously wounding another 15.

Pakistan

Five women injured in acid attacks

In the south-western province of Balochistan at least five young women were injured in acid attacks in the cities of Quetta and Mastung.

Syria

IS takes military base/gas field al-Schaar under government control again

The radical Islamist group Islamic State (IS) took a military base in ar-Raqqa province in northern Syria on 25 July 2014. After an exchange of fire the army withdrew from the base. At least 50, according to some sources 85, soldiers lost their lives, reportedly a large number of them was beheaded. Also 28 militant Islamists were allegedly killed. This was the first major confrontation between the Syrian army and IS. After several days of fighting the Syrian army succeeded to regain control of the al-Schaar gas field in Homs province that IS had conquered two weeks ago.

Continued fighting

Fighting continues for instance in the eastern part of the capital Damascus. There are reports that heavy fighting between rebel and government forces also broke out in the cities Aleppo and Deir ez-Zor on 24 July 2014.

The reported death toll for the civil war is over 170,000 to date.

The opposition deposes its interim government

On 22 July 2014 the general assembly of the opposition's National Coalition deposed the Syrian interim government led by Ahmed Tome which is subordinate to the general assembly. The dismissal was triggered by internal arguments between the different wings of the alliance which are supported by Saudi Arabia on the one hand and by Qatar on the other.

Gaza Strip/Israel

UN Security Council unanimously calls for ceasefire in Gaza

In the night of 28 July 2014 the UN Security Council unanimously called upon Israel and the Palestinians to maintain an "immediate and unconditional humanitarian ceasefire". Accordingly the fighting parties should stop fighting during the Muslim celebrations of the end of the fasting month (Eid al-Fitr) and thereafter. The paper said that the Security Council demanded the full observation of international law, including the protection of civilians and reiterated its demand to take measures to ensure the welfare of civilians. According to military sources Israel stopped firing at targets in the Gaza Strip. On 28 July 2014 an insider said that this ceasefire was unconditional, but that military operations against the tunnels in the Gaza Strip would continue. Rescue workers put the number of Palestinian casualties during the last three weeks of fighting at over one thousand, most of them civilians. The Israeli side suffered almost 50 casualties, almost all of them soldiers.

Turkey

High-ranking policemen arrested

During a nationwide police operation at least 55 high-ranking police officers were arrested on 22 July 2014, 40 of them only in Istanbul. They are charged with espionage, illegal bugging and document fraud targeting the inner circle around Prime Minister Erdogan. The media reported that among those arrested were many of the officers who initiated investigations for corruption against three ministers of the Erdogan cabinet and against companies and local officials in December 2013. The operation took place against the background of a power struggle between Erdogan's conservative Islamic Party for Justice and Development (AKP) and the movement of the exiled Fethullah Gülen, who is said to have many followers especially in the judiciary and among the police.

Iran

EU relaxes sanctions until end of November

The EU lifted a number of economic sanctions until 24 November 2014 mainly to the benefit of the oil exports which can be continued now. Also trading with gold with the Iranian government may continue. On 19 July 2014 the five veto powers and Germany agreed with Iran on an extension of the negotiations on the nuclear programme until the end of November.

Teheran airport is hub for illegal arms supplies

Western intelligence services possess information that the Pasdaran (revolutionary guards) have turned the civilian airport Imam-e Khomeini into a hub for arms supplies. The supplies go to the Assad regime in Syria, the Shiite Hezbollah militia in Lebanon and to other militant groups in the Middle East and the Arab world. According to reports Fateh-110 short-range missiles with over 200 km reach are stored in a special arsenal of the airport together with Fajr-5 artillery missiles as have already been used by Hezbollah, the Jihad al-Islami group in the Gaza Strip and possibly also Hamas. Further the airport served as a trading post for Type C-802

anti- naval missiles, anti-aircraft missiles, anti-tank missiles, mortar shells, small arms, and ammunition, the reports said.

Iran commits to the armament of Hamas

The Iranian government has committed to the military armament of the radical Islamist group Hamas in the Gaza Strip. According to the website of the Arab language broadcasting station al-Alam the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Ali Larijani said on 24 July 2014 that the Palestinian organisation had required technology for its arms production. By now the fighters in Gaza were capable of supplying themselves with arms. Already during the confrontation between Hamas and Israel in the fall of 2012 Larijani had said that he was "proud" of Iran's military and financial support of Hamas.

Four journalists arrested

According to the Washington Post their reporter Jason Rezaian, his wife Yeganeh and two independent photographers were arrested on 22 July 2014. The reasons are as yet unknown. The US State Department was aware of the incident, the Post said. In a first reaction a spokesman of the Iranian UN mission in New York said that the matter was under investigation.

Libya

Continued fighting - Foreign Ministry travel warning

The non-religious forces won the majority in the parliamentary elections of 25 June 2014. Although Libyan media generally agree that the non-Islamist groups have a clear majority, the currently dominating Islamists are delaying the hand-over of power to the newly elected parliament until the very last date, 4 August 2014, despite widespread international criticism.

As yet the security situation remains unstable and fighting continues. The military confrontations in Benghazi and Tripoli are intensifying. The regular army and troops of the renegade general Khalifa al-Haftar started another wave of strikes against Islamist extremists in Benghazi. The battle for the control of the international airport in Tripoli has lasted for over two weeks now.

In view of the fierce fighting the US closed its embassy in Tripoli on 26 July 2014 and the embassy staff evacuated to Tunisia. Over the last weeks the number of staff had already been scaled down. On 27 July 2014 also the German Foreign Office urged all German citizens to leave the country due to the continued fighting between the rivalling militias. There is also a strong warning against travel to the country. The warning says that the situation is very confusing and insecure, there is substantial risk of attacks or kidnappings. France, Italy, and the UK have meanwhile also requested their citizens to leave the country.

Egypt

Casualties on the Sinai Peninsula

In the north of the Sinai Peninsula Islamist extremists murdered two high-ranking officers on 25 July 2014. On 26 July 2014 four children died and four persons were wounded in a mortar attack targeting soldiers and policemen doing house searches in Al-Djura. The Egyptian government announced that over 500 soldiers and policemen became victims of Islamist extremist attacks nationwide in the last twelve months.

Nigeria

Kano: Bombing of people leaving church service and suicide attack

In Kano (capital of the northern state of the same name) an explosive device was thrown on faithful leaving the Sunday service at Catholic St. Charles Church on 27 July 2014. The church is located in the predominantly Christian district of Sabon Gari on Zungeru Road. A soldier guarding the church and four of the people that attended the service were killed and eight wounded. Three suspects were arrested.

On the same day around 1pm an about 16-year-old girl approached "Northwest University" in the Kofar Nasarawa district in a suspicious way. When she was checked by police she detonated a bomb which killed her and injured five policemen.

Both attacks are attributed to the Islamist terror organization Boko Haram.

Bomb attacks on leading cleric and former head of state in Kaduna

About 110 people were killed in two bombings in the city of Kaduna in northern Nigeria (capital of the Kaduna state) on 23 July 2014. The first bomb targeted the prominent Imam Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi. Around 1pm Bauchi's convoy was driving in the city centre on Alkali Road in the district of Unguwar Sarki when an explosive detonated in a car, according to other sources it was an IED in the form of a belt worn by the assassin. The cleric, who had repeatedly criticized the Islamist terror group Boko Haram, escaped unharmed.

Former General Muhammadu Buhari was the target of the second attack around 2.30pm. In the market area of the Kaduna district of Kawo a suicide bomber tried to hit Buhari's car, thereby exploding the bomb he was carrying in his car. From 1983-1985 Buhari had been Nigeria's military head of state. He came in second in the 2011 presidential elections and as a leading politician of the largest opposition party, the APC, he is a potential presidential candidate for the 2015 elections.

The attacks are attributed to the Boko Haram terror group.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Camp Tshatshi attacked

Between 1 and 1.30pm on 22 July 2014 armed men attacked the military camp 'Tshatshi' in Kinshasa, where the presidential guard is stationed. The attack was repulsed, but claimed seven victims among the attackers and one among the soldiers. So far there is no further official information.

Central African Republic

Ceasefire agreement signed

A ceasefire agreement for the Central African Republic was signed in Congo's capital Brazzaville on 23 July 2014. The truce agreed between the Muslim Seleka rebels and the Christian anti-Balaka militia calls for a termination of all fighting, the observation of human rights, and the protection of national unity. It remains to be seen whether this will really end the more than year-old conflict, in particular, because the rebels had been demanding the division of the country into a Muslim dominated north and a Christian dominated south only the day before.

Mali

Peace talks between the government and rebel groups

The peace talks between the Mali government and six rebel groups initiated on 16 July 2014 in Algiers were concluded for the time being by the signature of a document "to cease all hostilities" on 24 July 2014. Furthermore a procedure for the continuation of peace negotiations was agreed which will continue in mid-August and shall be completed in fall.

Eritrea

UN forms commission of inquiry

The UN's Human Rights Council sets up a commission of inquiry into Eritrea. After Syria and North Korea this is the third area of conflict for which this UN body has set up a special commission. The submission of the commission's first report is due for March 2015. In a statement, the Human Rights Council condemned "widespread and systematic" human rights violations by the Eritrean authorities. It criticized the arbitrary and extrajudicial executions, torture and unacceptable prison conditions in the country. Furthermore the Council demanded an end to the practice of military conscription of indefinite duration and to the shooting

orders on the national borders that is meant to deter Eritreans from leaving the country. According to the UN almost 4,000 persons have been fleeing the country every month since the beginning of the year to escape the brutal suppression and forced labour, the statement says.

South Sudan

Imminent famine

In a donor conference on 25 July 2014 the UN Security Council requested the donors' generous assistance. There was great risk that the current crises would deteriorate into a famine because of the conflict between government troops and insurgents. At the same time the Security Council appealed to the donor states to pay in the € 460m they had pledged in mid-May at a conference in Oslo.

Somalia

Imminent famine

According to UN information about 350,000 internal refugees are currently facing starvation in Mogadishu. The relief organisations lacked the financial resources to supply the refugees effectively. In addition, the ongoing draught and violence also threatened Somalia's south and southeast with famine.

Attacks on prominent personalities

The singer and parliamentary deputy Saado Ali Warsame and her driver died when unknown gunmen shot at her car on 23 July 2014.

The mayor of Mogadishu, Hassan Mohamed Hussein Mungab, who was appointed five months ago, survived a road bomb attack on his car uninjured. One passer-by was killed by the explosion and one woman was wounded.

Kosovo

Power struggle

Kosovo's Constitutional Court froze all resolutions adopted by the new parliament for two months in a decision on 24 July 2014. It also annulled the election of the top politician Isa Mustafa as speaker of parliament. The Supreme Court's injunction follows a motion of the former head of government Hashim Thaci and his party PDK. Although the PDK won the parliamentary elections, it became a minority when the former opposition parties formed a coalition. This coalition had ensured the election of the speaker of parliament and intended to form the new government. However, the acting head of government Thaci maintains that as the head of the strongest party he must be entitled to the office of the speaker of parliament and the formation of the government.

Russian Federation/North Caucasus

Kadyrov publishes photo of killed top terrorist Umarov

The leader of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov published a photo of the killed top terrorist Doku Umarov on his Instagram website on 19 July 2014 as final prove that Umarov is dead. This comes after Kadyrov's former statements that the Chechen rebel leader had been killed in a special operation had been doubted by members of the intelligence services and journalists. Shortly before Kadyrov's statement, the director of the Russian internal intelligence service FSB, Alexander Bortnikov, had informed journalists that the group led by Doku Umarov had already been annihilated at the end of 2013 and that the long wanted top terrorist had been killed in a FSB operation. Umarov committed numerous crimes in Russia and in North Caucasus. He, for instance, claimed responsibility for the two suicide bombings at Moscow's Domodedovo international airport on 24 January 2011 and on the Moscow underground on 29 March 2010 in which people were killed and wounded.

Ukraine

Government troops start offensive on Donetsk

On 26 July 2014 Ukrainian government troops started a massive offensive on the city of Donetsk that is held by pro-Russian separatists. Reportedly the soldiers already advanced up to the village of Horlivka north of the provincial capital. Once Horlivka is taken, the direct route to the regional capital of Donbass - Donetsk a city of one million - will be open for the anti-terror operation forces. Since 26 July 2014 the army also stepped up the shelling of Donetsk from where an increasing number of people are fleeing. Donetsk is the centre of the months-long uprising in eastern Ukraine. The pro-Russian separatist proclaimed their own people's republic there.

The crash site of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, which the Ukraine and the west are convinced was shot down by pro-Russian fighters, is also located within the Donetsk region. 298 people died in the crash.

Poroshenko denies civil war

Ukrainian President Poroshenko says that the conflict in eastern Ukraine is not a civil war, but a battle by his country against foreign mercenaries, bandits, and terrorists. This was a fight for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. According to Poroshenko this is not an internal conflict.

Assaults on two mayors

On 26 July 2014 two mayors became the targets of attacks. According to a statement of the Interior Ministry the mayor of Kremenchuk in central Ukraine, Oleg Babayev, was shot in his car in a drive-by shooting. The Ministry spokesman said that the unknown shooter had fired three shots and made no statement about the background of the assignation. Babayev had been the mayor of this city with a population over 220,000 since 2010, before he had been a deputy in parliament as member of the then prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko's "Fatherland" party.

In another attack in the city of Lviv in western Ukraine (former German name Lemberg, pop. approx. 730,000) shells were fired on the house of mayor Andrii Sadovyi, the ministry said. However, he was not at home and no-one was hurt. Sadovyi who does not belong to any political party is considered to be one of the most influential politicians in western Ukraine.

India

Sharia judgments set aside

Judgements handed down by Islamic courts are not legally binding in India. This was ruled by India's Supreme Court on 20 July 2014. The judgment says "no religion may restrict the fundamental rights of the individual". A petition had been submitted to challenge the parallel judicial system of Muslim courts with the objective to generally ban all Sharia courts. However, the Supreme Court did not rule precisely in this way. It said that religious institutions will remain free to issue regulations, which, however, had no binding effect. 150 to 180 million Muslims are estimated to be living in predominantly Hindu India forming a strong minority.

The petition related to a case dating back to 2005 that had horrified all of India. At the time a Sharia court annulled the marriage of a 28-year-old and forced her to live with her father-in-law who had previously raped her.

Cambodia

Political stalemate ends after one year

One year after the controversial elections the opposition and the government have agreed on reforms. On 22 July 2014 the leader of the opposition party Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) Sam Rainsy and Prime Minister Hun Sen agreed to start cooperating in parliament. In return the government promised to reform the election law and to release several CNRP members that had been arrested last week.

The parliamentary elections of July 2013 had caused the political stalemate. International observers had reported considerable irregularities to the benefit of the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Therefore opposition leader Rainsy said that his party could not accept the election results and demanded an independent investigation committee which was never appointed. As a consequence the opposition party boycotted

the opening of parliament in September 2013. 55 of the total of 133 seats remained empty, making regular parliamentary work impossible. There were repeated protests and arrests of opposition members. For more than three decades Prime Minister Hun Sen has been the most dominant figure in Cambodian politics. It is one of his achievements that Cambodia now is one of the fastest growing economic regions in South East Asia. At the same time he is regularly accused of human rights violations and the suppression of criticism and opponents.

Columbia

Rebels killed

At least 13 rebels died in two military operations targeting bases of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) in northern Arauca province on the border to Venezuela and of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) in the central province of Meta on 23 July 2014. The media reported the arrest of eight rebels.

Despite the on-going peace negotiations the leftist guerrillas had launched repeated attacks in recent weeks. FARC blew up several roads and bridges and the ELN attacked oil pipelines. Since the end of 2012 FARC has been negotiating about the termination of the conflict of several decades with the Colombian government in Cuba. Preparatory talks for official peace negotiations are underway with the ELN.