

## Asylum and Migration Information Centre

# Briefing Notes

1 July 2013

### **Iraq**

#### **Security situation**

On 24.06.13, a series of bomb attacks killed at least 39 people in Baghdad. On 25.06.13, a blast in Tuz Khurmato (Salahuddin province) killed at least 11 and injured 55. The attack was targeted against people protesting against the security situation and the dire living conditions in the city. On 27.06.13, attacks were launched in the cities of Baghdad and Baqubah (Diyala province), in Babil province and also in the city of Mosul (Ninive province), killing a total of 34 people and wounding approx. 90.

On 28.06.13, at least 10 people lost their lives in Anbar Province when two bombs were detonated.

On 29.06.13, at least 28 people were killed and approx. five were wounded in fights occurring in Baghdad and Ninive and in Anbar, Saladin and Diyala provinces.

On 30.06.13, attacks in Baghdad, Basra (Basra province), Mosul, Hilla (Babil province) and Kut (Wassit province) claimed the lives of at least 23 people, injuring 30.

#### **UN Special Envoy to Iraq takes stock on his term of office**

Near the end of his mission in Iraq, UN Special Envoy Martin Kobler voiced worry over rising levels of violence and worsening sectarianism, press reports said. The Sunni-Shiite conflict was „paralyzing the whole country“, he stated. However, he also noted some signs of progress, such as the improving ties with Kuwait, to which Iraq is still paying reparations, and elections that have largely been deemed free and fair.

### **Pakistan**

#### **Baluchistan: Suicide attack on Shia Muslims in Quetta**

On 30.06.13, a suicide bomber launched an attack near the Shia Ali Ibn-Abu-Talib Imambargah mosque in Hazara quarter of Quetta city, leaving 28 dead and 60 injured, all of them members of the Hazara people who adhere to Shia Muslim faith. As of 01.07.13, two more victims lost their lives. Police stated that the bomb was to be detonated in the mosque itself. However, the attacker blew himself up when he saw security guards in the mosque blocking his entry. The proscribed Lashkar-i-Jhangvi has claimed responsibility for the attack.

#### **Explosion near Miranshah**

On 30.06.13, a detonating bomb claimed the lives of four persons and injured seven near Wana/Miranshah (North Waziristan FATA Agency). Four members of an anti-Taliban militia (Amn Lashkar) were among the victims.

On the same day, four soldiers were killed and 12 injured when their vehicle was hit by a road bomb, also near Miranshah.

#### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Bomb blast in Peshawar**

On 30.06.13, a car bomb was detonated in Badbher area outside Peshawar city (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province). The attack was aimed at a Frontier Corps police convoy and left 18 civilians dead and 46 injured. Among the casualties were two Frontier Corps members. As yet, no-one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

### **Sindh: Attack on senior judge of Sindh High Court in Karachi**

On 26.06.13, an attack was launched on a convoy of a senior Sindh High Court judge in Burns Road, Karachi (Sindh province), leaving nine people dead and 15 injured. Judge Maqbool Baqir was wounded. The Pakistani Taliban have claimed responsibility for the attack.

## **Iran**

### **President-elect seeks „constructive interaction with the world“**

Iranian President-elect Hassan Rowhani vows to engage constructively with the international community and ease tensions after taking over office in the beginning of August. Moderation in foreign policy meant neither surrender nor confrontation, but constructive and effective interaction with the world, he said in his first live televised speech since his election in mid-June. Interaction and dialogue should be based on reciprocity, respect and mutual trust, Ahmadinejad's successor continued. He pledged to conduct his foreign policy „by taking into consideration all rights of the nation“ and according to the orders of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Mr Rowhani continued that he would seek to achieve „a balance between realism and idealism“. Regarding Iran's controversial nuclear programme, Mr Rowhani has already announced greater transparency. At the same time, he clearly stated that Iran would continue to enrich uranium. Moderate cleric Rowhani, who is supported by moderate and reform factions, announced that his government would not be obliged to political parties or factions, but rather be composed of competent and moderate politicians of all political colours.

## **Syria**

### **Military offensive against rebel-held city of Homs**

On 29.06.13, the Syrian army launched an offensive against the rebel stronghold of Homs, attacking several neighbourhoods in the country's third-largest city with fighter jets, rebel activist reported. Also, ground troops directly attacked the city district of Khalidiya, reports went on. According to Syrian state TV, government troops were making 'great progress'. Neighbouring district Juret al-Shaieah was attacked by air raid, activists said. The shelling of Homs follows steady military gains by government forces, backed by Lebanese Hezbollah militants, in the region bordering Lebanon. Meanwhile, President Assad's forces are in control of a corridor of territory connecting the capital Damascus with his traditional strongholds in the mountains overlooking the Mediterranean.

### **Suicide attack in Damascus**

On 27.06.13, a suicide bombing in the Old City of Damascus has killed at least four people. The attack occurred in a quarter of the city inhabited mainly by Christians, but seems to have been targeted at a Shia Muslim aid organisation, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

### **Government troops capture Al-Qaryatayn**

In central Homs province, government troops stormed the rebel-held town of Al-Qaryatayn, 'restoring peace and security', Syrian state TV reported. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights director Rami Abdel Rahman said that the army was now canvassing the city and arresting people, after days of fierce fights to gain control of the city.

## **Lebanon**

### **Clashes in south Lebanon**

On 24.06.13, at least 12 people were killed in hours-long clashes between the Lebanese army and militant Sunni Muslim fighters in the southern port city of Sidon. A military spokesman told AFP news agency that the soldiers had been confronted by supporters of Salafi Sheik Ahmed al-Assir, who had attacked a military cordon. Radical cleric Ahmed al-Assir is an outspoken opponent of the powerful Shiite Hezbollah whose members are supporting President Bashar al-Assad against the insurgents in neighbouring Syria.

## **Turkey**

### **Accession negotiations**

Last week, the EU foreign ministers agreed on a compromise solution suggested by Germany to restart accession negotiations with Turkey in autumn. In view of the harsh measures the Turkish police has adopted against the protesters, negotiations on the next Chapter dealing with regional policy will be postponed until the new EU progress report on Turkey is presented.

## **Libya**

### **Clashes in Tripoli**

On 25.06.13, fierce clashes occurred again between rival armed militias when former rebels tried to free five comrades who had been arrested by pro-government militias on the previous day. As of 26.06.13, ten people killed and more than 100 wounded were reported. Subsequently, Prime Minister Ali Zeidan removed the defence minister from office.

### **Sebha and Benghazi: Car bomb attacks**

On 26.06.13, a car bomb attack in the city of Sebha left at least one person dead, a member of the city council stated. According to the Libyan news agency Lana, two people were killed and at least 17 injured. On the same day, an officer of the Libyan army was killed in a car bomb attack in eastern Benghazi city.

### **General National Congress elects new president**

On 25.06.13, Libya's General National Congress member Nouri Abusahmain was elected as the parliament's its new president. The member of the minority Berber secured 96 of 184 votes in the second round of polling. The General National Congress is Libya's highest political and legislative authority. Its president or speaker is the highest representative of the state.

## **Egypt**

### **At least ten people killed in mass demonstrations**

Egyptian military report that more than a million people protested on 30.06.13, the first anniversary of Islamist President Mohamed Morsi's inauguration, demanding his resignation.

In Cairo, the marches of opponents and supporters started peacefully. However, two people died and several were wounded in the night of 01.07.13, when protesters ransacked the Muslim Brotherhood's headquarters, and supporters of the Brotherhood made use of firearms in turn.

Violent clashes in the city of Assiut claimed three lives; both in Beni Suef and Fayoum, one person was killed.

Already on 28.06.13, an Egyptian citizen and a 21 year-old US student were killed in Alexandria. The student, who was working for a U.S. educational institution, was stabbed when trying to film protesters storming an office of the Muslim Brotherhood. In Port Said, a journalist lost his life.

In a new grassroots protest movement named Tamarod ('rebellion'), opponents of President Morsi claim to have collected more than 22 million signatures to withdraw confidence from the President and to hold early presidential elections.

## **Serbia/Kosovo**

### **EU summit: Accession negotiations with Serbia, negotiations with Kosovo**

On 28.06.13, the EU heads of state and government agreed to open accession negotiations with Serbia by January 2014. At the same time, a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo was given green light at the summit. The agreement is one of the preconditions for opening EU accession negotiations at a later point in time.

## **Kosovo**

### **Parliament ratifies agreement on normalisation with Serbia**

On 27.06.13, the Kosovo parliament ratified the EU-brokered normalisation agreement with Serbia, with 84 of 110 members of parliament voting in favour of the deal. The agreement provides for the inclusion of the Serbian minority living in northern Kosovo, in exchange for more autonomy for the Serbian municipalities there. Kosovo's third-largest parliamentary party, the nationalist *Vetevendosje* movement ('self-determination') rejects the agreement, striving for Kosovo to be returned to Albania and fearing a sell-out of Albanian interests to the Serbs. Prior to the vote, approximately 300 supporters of *Vetevendosje* tried to prevent the members of parliament from entering the parliamentary building. Police officers, who were spray-painted by some demonstrators, pushed the protesters away from the entrance. According to official sources, at least 17 police officers were injured and at least 68 people were detained.

## **Albania**

### **Change of power**

According to the official result of the parliamentary elections held on 23.06.13, the socialist opposition 'Alliance for a European Albania' won roughly 53 percent of the votes (84 out of 140 seats in parliament). The centre-left alliance led by Edi Rama, former mayor of Tirana (2000 until 2011), consists of nearly 40 political parties and factions. The conservative 'Alliance for Employment, Prosperity and Integration' led by current Prime Minister Sali Berisha secured roughly 36 percent (56 seats). On 26.06.13, Berisha conceded defeat and stepped down from office. At the same time, he resigned as chairman of the 'Democratic Party'.

## **Nigeria**

### **Application of capital punishment**

On the evening of 24.06.13, four death row prisoners were hanged in Benin, capital of southern Edo State. They had been sentenced for armed robbery and murder more than 16 years ago. A fifth person was to be hanged with the other four, but his execution was halted after it was established that his death sentence required a firing squad to carry it out. Amnesty International said that the executions violated both domestic and international law, since the prisoners had still appeals pending in their cases.

The last known executions in the country had taken place in 2006. Since then, a voluntary moratorium has been in place. On 16.06.13, however, President Jonathan called on the State governors to sign more death warrants. Presently, there are more than 1,000 prisoners on death row in Nigeria.

### **Ethnic unrest in Plateau State**

On 27.06.13, an attack was launched on the three villages of Karkashi, Bolgang und Magama located in Langtang South Local Government, roughly 240 km south of Jos, the capital of Plateau State. The villages are inhabited mainly by members of the Christian Taroh community. During the attack, more than 100 houses were torched and 28 villagers were killed (other sources state 32 victims). According to a military spokesman, suspected ethnic Fulani Muslim herdsmen invaded the village after a massive cattle theft. The security forces killed 20 perpetrators and detained two. Subsequently, two neighbouring Fulani and Hausa villages were raided in what seems to be a revenge action.

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## **Somalia**

### **Al-Shabab militants kill two of their founders**

A group around al-Shabab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane claims to have executed two of their own top commanders. One of them, Ibrahim Haji Jama Mead 'al-Afghani', had formerly headed the extremist group's forces in southern Somalia's Lower Juba region, based in the strategic port city of Kismayo. He was said to have criticised Godane's style of leadership a few months ago. The U.S. had offered a 5 million US\$ reward for his capture.

Observers see a continuing split of al-Shabab into rival factions, with one point of disagreement being the ideological orientation. Some al-Shabab members want to concentrate on the overthrow of the government in Mogadishu, while others, led by Godane, support the International Jihad against the West.

### **Hassan Dahir Aweys arrested in Mogadishu**

Last weekend, police arrested Somali Islamist Hassan Dahir Aweys at Mogadishu airport. Aweys, one of the founders of al-Shabab, belongs to Godane's opponents within the organisation. Last week, he was said to have been held in Barawa on the initiative of Godane, but managed to escape. Allegedly, Sheikh Aweys negotiated his transfer to Mogadishu and impunity with the Somali government. However, government sources stated that amnesty would only be offered to him if he renounces violence.

78 year-old Sheikh Aweys is regarded as the founder of militant Islamism in Somalia. He had served as a colonel in the Somali National Army in the Ogaden War against Ethiopia. In the 1990s, he founded the Islamist militia al-Ittihad al-Islamiya, a terror group who launched bomb attacks in Ethiopia, striving for an Islamic State of Somalia including the Ethiopian Ogaden region. Later, Sheikh Aweys was the spiritual leader of the Islamic Courts Union (IUC), which controlled the capital of Mogadishu for several months in 2006. Aweys also appears on the U.S. and UN Security Council terrorist list.

## **China**

### **Violent outbursts in Xinjiang**

State media reported that on 26.06.13, a 'terror attack' in the Uighur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang province claimed the lives of 35 people. A gang of 17 Muslim extremists armed with knives attacked a police station, the local government building and a construction site in the remote village of Likqun (Shanshan district), killing 24 people before the police shot dead eleven of the perpetrators, the reports said. The alleged leader of the gang was arrested. On 27.06.13, Radio Free Asia said that according to unconfirmed reports, at least 46 people were killed, among them several security officers.

At an unidentified date in June, 12 people died in Ghorachol town (Awat district), apparently by explosive devices they were carrying with them while being pursued by police officers, Radio Free Asia reported on 26.06.13. Local officials said that the 12 were bomb makers caught by the police.

### **Tibet: Restrictions on worship of Dalai Lama eased**

In deviation from current practice, Chinese authorities have unofficially allowed Tibetan monks to revere the Dalai Lama as the spiritual – not political – leader in some areas of Qinghai and Sichuan provinces inhabited by Tibetans, as was reported by Radio Free Asia on 26.06.13, citing official statements introducing this new 'experimental' provision.

So far, China has been accusing members of the Tibetan government-in-exile, the so-called 'Dalai Clique', of separatist activities. Within the frame of 'patriotic education measures', Tibetan monks and nuns are forced to distance themselves from the Dalai Lama and to defame him.

## **Mongolia**

### **Presidential elections**

Current president Tsakhia Elbegdorj won a second term in office in the presidential elections held on 26.06.13. According to the preliminary results published on 27.06.13, he received 50.2 percent of the votes. Former wrestler Badmaanyambuu Bat-Erdene, who was nominated by the Mongolian People's Party, gained 41.7 percent. The first woman running for the office, Natsag Udval (Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party) obtained 6.5 percent of the votes. Elbegdorj's Democratic Party holds the majority in Parliament. The election turnout was 64 percent.

Mongolia possesses significant resources of coal, copper and gold, whose exploitation has brought huge economic benefits to the country during the last years. Still, roughly a quarter of the three million inhabitants live below the poverty line. The use of mining profits was a major topic in the election campaign, along with corruption both in the political and the economic spheres.