

## Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

29 July 2013

### **Afghanistan**

#### **Security situation**

On 23.07.13, a suicide bomber killed three ISAF soldiers in Saidabad district, Wardak province (east of Kabul). On 28.07.13, at least 45 Taliban members were killed in an airstrike by Afghan military with support from ISAF forces in Deshu district bordering Pakistan (southern Helmand province). Apparently, most of the militants killed were Pakistani Taliban from neighbouring Nimroz province.

### **Pakistan**

#### **Balochistan: Attacks on Coast Guard and on a Shia Muslim mosque**

On 27.07.13, armed men attacked a check post of the Pakistan Coast Guard in Kuldan area of Gwadar district (Balochistan), killing seven Coast Guard members and wounding another seven. The banned Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) has claimed responsibility for the attack, stating however that 25 Coast Guard members were killed.

Already on 21.07.13, the BLF had raided a different checkpoint in Sansar area of the same district, killing eight Coast Guard members.

On 21.07.13, three persons attacked a Shia Muslim mosque (Imambargah) in Hazara Town (Quetta City). Private guards returned the fire and killed one of the attackers, the other two were able to escape. Police said that the attacker who was killed had worn a suicide belt with a hand grenade.

#### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Attacks on a market and on a passenger bus**

On 26.07.13, twin blasts on a busy market and a nearby taxi stand killed 45 people and injured 100 in the city of Parachinar (50,000 inhabitants), the largest city and administrative headquarters of FATA Kurram Agency.

On the same day, two people were killed and six injured in Lower Kurram, Mangag area (Khar Patti, Kurram Agency), when a passenger bus hit a landmine.

#### **Sindh: Attack on intelligence agency office**

On 24.07.13, five suicide bombers attacked an office of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's most important intelligence agency, in the city of Sukkur (900,000 inhabitants, third-largest city of Sindh province). The ISI is subordinated to the armed forces. All of the militants and two ISI members were killed in the attack; two other government officials died and 38 people were wounded.

### **Iraq**

#### **Security situation**

According to media information, the month of July has so far seen more than 700 victims of violence. On 22.07.13 alone, more than 50 people died when insurgents stormed the Abu Ghraib and Taji jails near Baghdad. Apparently, hundreds of Sunni Muslim prisoners were able to escape from Abu Ghraib prison,

among them high-rank al-Qaida members. Subsequently, Shia Muslim extremists raided four Sunni Muslim mosques near the cities of Kirkuk and Kut, killing 12 people and injuring another 50.

On 25.07.13, Sunni militants executed 14 Shia truck drivers in the town of Sulaiman Bek (north of Baghdad), after having set up a road block. On the same day, other clashes and bomb attacks claimed the lives of at least 28 people in Baghdad, Madaen and Mosul. On 28.07.13, at least 10 soldiers were killed in a bomb attack on Kurdish security officers in northern Tuz Khurmato town, a notoriously unstable region over which both the central government and the autonomous Kurdish administration in northern Iraq claim jurisdiction.

## **Syria**

### **Ongoing fights/Death toll has risen to more than 100,000**

Fights are continuing. Last week's reports included, among others, several car bomb attacks in Damascus, air strikes on Homs city, fights between Islamists and secular insurgents in Idlib and protest marches against the Jihadists of the al-Nusra Front in al-Raqqqa. On 27.07.13, the state news agency SANA reported that a total of 123 people, most of them civilians, were killed in an offensive launched by insurgents during the week in northern Khan al-Assal city. On 26.07.13, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which is opposed to the Assad regime, reported that more than 150 soldiers lost their lives in the offensive on 22. and 23.07.13.

According to the United Nations, the violent clashes have claimed more than 100,000 lives since March 2011.

## **Lebanon**

### **EU adds Hezbollah militia to list of terrorist organisations**

On 22.07.13, the EU Foreign Ministers agreed to add the military wing of Hezbollah to their terror list. The sanctions enable the organisation's assets in Europe to be frozen and make it illegal to give further financial support to the organisation. The move was driven by concerns over the group's involvement in a bomb attack on a bus carrying Israeli tourists in Bulgaria on 18.07.12, killing seven people, among them five Israeli tourists. In February 2013, the Bulgarian interior minister had blamed Hezbollah for the attack. Lebanese President Michel Suleiman called upon the EU to reconsider the decision in order to secure stability in Lebanon. Since 1992, Hezbollah has had seats in the Lebanese Parliament; currently, the organisation forms part of the government.

## **Israel/Palestinian Autonomous Areas**

### **Peace negotiations to be resumed/Israel releases 104 Palestinian prisoners**

On 29.07.13, Israeli and Palestinian leaders will resume peace negotiations in Washington. Before, the Israeli cabinet had satisfied the precondition set by the Palestinians and approved the release of 104 long-term Palestinian prisoners arrested before the Oslo Accords. Negotiations had stalled in 2010 after Israel refused Palestinian demands to halt settlement expansion in the occupied Palestinian territories.

## **Turkey**

### **Turkish Court allows development of Gezi Park**

On 22.07.13, an administrative court annulled a lower court's order of June to halt the planned development of Istanbul's Gezi Park, after the government had appealed the ruling. Now, construction work can begin after two months of protest against the development plans and Prime Minister Erdogan's governance. On 20.07.13, police had used tear gas and water cannons to disperse a last protest rally with approx. 1,000 participants.

## **Tunisia**

### **Unrest after assassination of politician**

On 25.07.12, the second political assassination this year occurred when unidentified gunmen shot dead Mohamed Brahmi in front of his house in a suburb of Tunis, killing the 58-year old opposition politician before the eyes of his wife and escaping on a motorbike. Mr Brahmi, an influential political figure, was a member of the Tunisian parliament and both founder and chairman of the 'Movement of the People', a small, secular left-wing party. As a member of the constitutional assembly which is currently tasked with designing a new constitution, he was adhering not to the religious, but the political left faction. After his assassination, Tunisia's biggest trade union UGTT called for a nationwide strike. Numerous people gathered in Tunis and other cities, protesting against terrorism and violence. Security forces dispersed an angry crowd in front of the interior ministry with tear gas. In the city of Sidi Bouzid, protesters attacked the headquarters of the government party and set the building on fire.

On 27.07.13, thousands of people participated in a funeral march for Mohammed Brahmi. Media reported that the police used tear gas to disperse the crowds. Only a few hours before the funeral march started, a bomb had exploded in a police car in front of a police station in Tunis; a police officer was slightly injured, a police spokesman stated. In the night to Saturday, a protester was found dead in unexplained circumstances in the southern town of Gafsa.

The government blamed a radical Salafist group for the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi, saying that he was killed with the same gun that had been used to kill opposition politician Chokri Belaid, an outspoken opponent of the Islamisation of the Tunisian society, in the beginning of February 2013. Belaid's assassination had sparked the biggest wave of protests since President Ben Ali's ouster in January 2011, leading to the resignation of Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali and a cabinet reshuffle. In the meantime, two Salafists have been arrested and indicted for murder of Mohamed Brahmi; those behind the murder are still at large.

## **Libya**

### **Benghazi/Tripoli**

On 27.07.13, a mass jailbreak occurred from Benghazi's al-Kweifiya prison, with more than 1,200 inmates escaping. They had started a riot and were supported by armed men outside the prison. 18 prisoners were captured, some returned voluntarily to jail. A large number of the escapees had been convicted for severe crimes. The Prime Minister said that those living around the prison had attacked the place because they didn't want to have a jail in their neighbourhood. It remains unclear whether the attack is connected to the nationwide protests against the assassination of lawyer and human rights activist Abdulsalam Al-Mesmari on 26.07.13. He was a critic of the Muslim Brotherhood and the process of Islamisation of the society and had played a major role in the revolution against Colonel Gaddafi's regime. After the outbreak, protesters stormed the office of a political party with close links to the Muslim Brotherhood in Tripoli and the office of another Islamist party, destroying the furniture and shouting paroles like in Egypt: "We don't want the Muslim Brotherhood but the army and the police!"

On 27.07.13, a retired air force colonel was killed in Benghazi.

On 26.07.13, three security officers were shot dead by unidentified gunmen.

On 25.07.13, the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Tripoli was attacked with a rocket-propelled grenade. There were no injuries, but the building was damaged.

### **Increase in gross domestic product**

According to the African Economic Outlook 2013, Libya's economy experienced a major rebound in 2012 with an estimated 95% GDP growth. For 2013, an increase of 15% is expected. Inflation for consumer goods is expected to decline from 7% (2012) to just 5% (2013). Budget surplus is estimated at 13% for 2012; for this year, around 6 percent are expected. Foreign currency reserves were around 27% in 2012; for this year, 23% is expected. This positive development is mainly explained by the recovery of Libya's oil production, with no impact on the labour market outside the oil and gas sector.

## **Egypt**

### **Dozens die in protests**

In the night to 27.07.13, a total of 72 people died and hundreds were wounded in mass rallies of supporters and opponents of ousted President Morsi, as was reported by the health ministry. The Muslim Brotherhood claims that the number of fatalities is almost twice as high. The violent clashes between security forces and Morsi supporters, the worst since the President's ouster, had been sparked by some protesters attempting to occupy the 6<sup>th</sup> October Bridge across the Nile river near Tahrir Square. Police and security forces stationed on the bridge opened fire; eyewitnesses said that they had also seen snipers on the roofs of nearby buildings shooting at the protesters. Medical staff said that 70 percent of all injuries were caused by snipers.

Interior minister Mohamed Ibrahim said that Muslim Brotherhood members had attacked the security forces in order to provoke an incident. He stated that 14 policemen and 37 soldiers died in the clashes.

## **Russian Federation**

### **Security situation in North Caucasus, first half of 2013**

According to the Chechen interior ministry, members of the security forces have killed 24 extremist fighters in the first half of 2013. Furthermore, 41 members of illegal armed groups were arrested and several secret arms depots were discovered with lots of firearms and ammunition. Also, eleven fighters have voluntarily surrendered, the report went on. Chechen interior minister Ruslan Alkhanov underlined that the remaining separatist groupings in Chechnya were no longer able to destabilise the republic and that they had no more support from the local population.

Nikolai Patrushev, former head of the Russian Internal Security Service FSB and current secretary of Russia's presidential security council, said that the risk of terrorist attacks has reduced considerably in North Caucasus for the first time in years. In the first half of 2013, the number of terrorist crimes dropped by 43 percent, he continued. Moreover, the security forces were inflicting significant losses to the separatist/Islamist groupings, he added. However, the situation in the region was still complex, he warned, particularly in the Russian Republic of Dagestan, where more than 80 percent of all fights and attacks occur.

## **Nigeria**

### **Northern Nigeria: Clashes between vigilante groups and Boko Haram**

On 27.07.13, young members of a vigilante group („Civilian Joint Task Force“ – Civilian JTF) from Maiduguri (capital of the northern Borno State) were searching for alleged members of the Islamist terror organisation Boko Haram in the village of Dawashi (near Lake Chad, Kukawa Local Government Area, Borno State). During the operation, Boko Haram members opened fire on the villagers, killing at least 20 people, mostly fishermen and merchants.

In another incident on 26.07.13, five vigilante group members from Maiduguri searching for Boko Haram members in the village of Mainok (approx. 50 km from Maiduguri, Konduga Local Government Area) were killed by the terrorists, the group reported. However, an army spokesman said that only one youth was killed and another one injured.

On 27.07.13, the Nigerian newspaper Daily Trust cited eyewitnesses saying that on 25.07.13, an alleged Boko Haram member was burnt alive by a vigilante group in Maiduguri. This was the second assault of this type in a week, the report went on. Security forces have not yet confirmed the incident.

Roughly two months ago, vigilante groups were founded by young people in several places in northern Nigeria, particularly in Maiduguri, with the aim to help the security forces to seize suspected Boko Haram members. They say that due to their good knowledge of the area, they are able to identify and apprehend the militants and can hand them over to the security forces. In several cases, they have been entrusted with controls at road blocks.

## **DR Congo**

### **North Kivu: Government forces and M23 rebels commit serious human rights violations**

In a report published on 22.07.13, NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) says that at least 44 people have been executed and at least 61 women and girls raped by M23 ('March 23 Movement') in the country's eastern province since March 2013. By means of interviews both with the local population and M23 deserters, HRW also documented the forced recruitment of dozens of men and boys by M23 in east Congo. Rwanda is continuing support of M23 by providing the rebel organisation with soldiers, arms, ammunition and supplies, the HRW report continued. On 17.07.13, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had expressed concerns about reports that Congolese government soldiers again mistreated M23 rebels and desecrated their bodies in the first days after the beginning of new fights on 14.07.13. He said he was reviewing the support of those army units suspected of involvement in the incidents. On 18.07.13, the Congolese government reacted with the arrest of the army lieutenant responsible for the desecration and his transfer to the military justice.

## **South Sudan**

### **President dismisses cabinet**

Following a smoldering power struggle in the governing Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), President Salva Kiir Mayardit dismissed his entire cabinet and suspended the party's secretary general Pagan Amun in a surprise move on 23.07.13. Observers say that different factions have formed in the party in the run-up to the parliamentary elections scheduled to take place in 2015. Apparently, Salva Kiir wants to get rid of several influential competitors. In particular his deputy Riek Machar was reported to have repeatedly called for a change at the top of state and governing party, saying that 90 percent of the country's tax and customs revenues are embezzled.

Salva Kiir is a member of the Dinka people, the major ethnic group of the country, whereas Riek Machar is a Nuer. In the war against North Sudan, Nuer militia leaders, temporarily also including Riek Machar, had supported the North against the SPLA/M. Now, only two years after the country's independence, the rift between Salva Kiir and Riek Machar might lead to a civil war in South Sudan.

After the dismissal of the government, radio stations in the capital Juba called upon the population to maintain law and order. Government institutions are guarded by the security forces.

## **Somalia**

### **Suicide attack on Turkish embassy**

On 27.07.13, four people, among them a Turkish police officer, lost their lives in a suicide attack on a residential compound for staff members of the Turkish embassy in Mogadishu. Apparently, the Turkish security forces succeeded in killing two of the assailants who had tried to enter the residential compound. A third assailant was said to have detonated himself in a car.

## **Mali**

### **Presidential elections**

On 28.07.13, presidential elections were held. Official results are expected by 02.08.13. Should none of the candidate secure the absolute majority of votes, a run-off round will be held on 11.08.13. Parliamentary elections, which had originally also been scheduled for July, have been postponed for an indeterminate time. Officially, 6.8 million people are eligible to vote in Mali. However, experts expect a very low turnout, given the precarious security situation. Besides, hundreds of thousands of refugees have not even received their ballot papers. A total of 27 candidates were on the ballot, among them 68-year-old political veteran Ibrahim Keita, and 61-year-old astrophysicist Cheik Modibo Diarra who had led the interim national unity government for several months. Aissata Haidara Cissé was the only woman in the presidential race. Dioncounda Traoré, interim President since April 2012, did not seek re-election.

## **Togo**

### **Ruling party wins parliamentary majority**

On 25.07.13, parliamentary elections were held. The voting, originally scheduled for October 2012, had been postponed several times because of opposition demands for reforms and boycott threats. On 28.07.13, the national electoral commission published the results giving the governing party 62 of 91 seats. The strongest opposition force, the alliance Collectif Sauvons le Togo (CST) gained 19 seats. The results are yet to be confirmed by the constitutional court. Electoral observers of the African Union and of the West African Economic Community ECOWAS said that the elections were held in 'acceptable' conditions, whereas the CST complained about manipulations and irregularities. Around 3.3 million Togolese citizens were eligible to vote, the turnout was almost 66 percent.

## **China**

### **Authorities impose new restrictions on display of Dalai Lama pictures**

On 22.07.13, Radio Free Asia reported that Chinese authorities are placing new restrictions on the possession and display of photos of the Dalai Lama in Tibetan-populated regions of Qinghai province, searching motor vehicles and confiscating photos.

In late June, RFA had reported that Chinese officials were allowing Tibetan monks to revere the Dalai Lama and display pictures of him in several regions of Qinghai and Sichuan provinces inhabited by Tibetans (see BN of 01.07.13). However, the Chinese authorities had immediately denied such reports.

## **Myanmar**

### **Amnesty**

On 23.07.13, a government spokesperson announced the release of 73 political prisoners. In the previous week, President Thein Sein had declared to set free all political prisoners by the end of 2013 (see BN of 22.07.13). However, the Thailand-based organisation Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) has reported that the government is continuing to arrest activists.

### **Attack on radical Buddhist monk**

As was reported on 22.07.13, a bomb attack was carried out on an assembly of radical Buddhist monk Wirathu in the city of Mandalay, injuring five people. Wirathu himself remained unhurt. He is considered the leading figure of the anti-Muslim '969 Movement'. Apparently, radical Buddhist instigated the anti-Muslim violence that has claimed dozens of lives since June 2012, with tens of thousands forced to seek refuge elsewhere in the country.