

## Group 22 – Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

8 December 2014

### **Iraq**

#### Security situation

According to Iraq Body Count (IBC), 1,468 civilians lost their lives in the month of November 2014.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) reports that 936 civilians were killed and 1.826 were injured in November. A further 296 members of the Iraqi security forces were killed and 608 were injured. Baghdad was the worst affected governorate with 1.253 civilian casualties (332 killed, 921 injured), followed by Salah al-Din (74 killed, 114 injured) and Diyala (37 killed, 71 injured). These figures do not include the casualties in Anbar province.

According to information obtained by UNAMI from the Health Directorate in Anbar, the province suffered a total of 1,026 civilian casualties (402 killed and 624 injured). This included 71 killed and 437 injured in Ramadi and 331 killed and 187 injured in Fallujah.

In total, nearly 12,000 people have been killed and around 22,000 injured since the beginning of 2014. UNAMI points out that the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum, since it is impossible to effectively verify casualties in conflict areas.

On 04.12.14, several bomb attacks launched in Baghdad and Kirkuk killed at least 30 people. On 07.12.14, seven people lost their lives and another 26 were injured in a suicide attack outside a police checkpoint near Baghdad.

#### New deal on oil budget

As was reported by German press agency DPA on 02.12.14, the government of the autonomous Kurdish region and Iraq's government have reached an agreement resolving their longstanding dispute over the oil exports and budget payments. The Kurdish regional government agreed to support Iraqi oil production with 550,000 barrels (159 litres each) per day. In return, the Kurds would receive 1 billion US-dollars monthly from the Iraqi budget.

### **Turkey**

#### **Corruption**

Transparency International's annual corruption index shows Turkey suffering the biggest drop since last year, sliding to 64<sup>th</sup> place from 53<sup>rd</sup>. Transparency International explains this with Turkey's political situation, with a deterioration of the freedom of expression, including pressure on and detention of journalists.

### **Iran**

#### **Iranian air force bombs IS targets in Iraq**

During the last days, Iran's air force has attacked targets of the IS terror militia in Iraq using US-made F4 phantom jets, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby told CNN in Washington. This is the first time that the U.S. confirmed the Iranian air force conducting strikes in Iraq. Mr Kirby pointed out that the international anti-IS

coalition was not coordinating with Iranian forces and that it was up to the Iraqi government to oversee military flights by different countries. So far, Iran's strategy has been to provide military advice to the Iraqi forces via their al-Quds force commanded by Qassem Suleimani, but not to intervene directly. The Iranian foreign ministry is organizing an international meeting against the IS on December 9-10, with the participation of representatives from more than 80 countries, Iranian foreign ministry spokeswoman Marsieh Afcham said.

## **Syria**

### **Attack on military air base**

In the night of 04.12.14, the terror militia Islamic State has started to attack the last bastion of the Syrian army in Dair-as Saur province. On 06.12.14, a suicide bomber blew himself up at the entrance of the military airport, it was reported, after which IS took control over large parts of the airport. In the meantime, the Syrian government troops have succeeded in pushing the extremists back with massive air strikes, possibly also with the use of chlorine gas. Apparently, a total of 120 people have lost their lives in the fighting in the last three days

### **Syria accuses Israeli jets of airstrikes**

On 07.12.14, the state news agency SANA reported that Israeli fighter jets struck several targets near the capital of Damascus in the afternoon of that day. The targets were government-controlled facilities close to Damascus and Dimas, including premises near the international airport. The attack may have been targeted at a military depot, in order to prevent the supply of weapons to the Hezbollah militia in Lebanon.

### **Casualties**

On 02.12.14, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that since March 2011, more than 200,000 people have lost their lives in the civil war, among them over 136,000 fighters from both sides. Roughly a third of the victims were civilians. Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said the real toll could be much higher, since only confirmed cases were reported. The observatory refers to a network of local informants. Other organisations, including the UN, no longer provide statistics on casualties, as the information situation is unclear in Syria. According to the Observatory, the casualties were distributed as follows: 63,000 civilians, 76,000 fighters for the Syrian regime, including Shiite militia members from abroad, 37,000 rebels and 23,000 Islamist fighters from abroad. Around 3,000 casualties were uncategorized.

## **Syria/Iran**

### **Iran plans international conference in the fight against IS 'caliphate'**

Iran is set to hold an international meeting against the IS on December 9-10, with the participation of the foreign ministers from Syria and Iraq. In total, representatives from more than 40 countries are expected to come to Tehran, including former prime ministers and foreign ministers from Europe and the Arab region.

## **Lebanon**

### **Fighting between army and Islamist groups**

After the abduction and killing of a Lebanese soldier by al-Nusra Front members, fighting erupted between al-Nusra and IS militants on one side and Lebanese troops on the other in Aarsal town near the Syrian border.

## **Yemen**

### **US reporter and South African teacher killed in failed rescue mission**

US journalist Luke Somers and South African teacher Pierre Korkie have been killed during an operation to rescue the men who were being held hostage by al-Qaeda, as was confirmed by US defence secretary Chuck Hagel on 06.12.14. Members of the terror network 'Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula' (AQAP) had killed

the two men during the rescue operation on 05.12.14, he said. US President Barack Obama stated that he had ordered the rescue mission on 05.12.14 because the life of the US hostage was in imminent danger. In his statement, the President strongly condemned the 'barbaric murder' of Luke Somers. The other hostage, Pierre Korkie, had been kidnapped together with his wife in May 2013. For his release, AQAP had demanded three million US dollar (2.43 million euros). In the beginning of 2014, Mr Korkie's wife was released following mediations by NGO 'Gift of the Givers'. Both Yemeni security forces and the US army are regularly operating against AQAP's strongholds in the south of Yemen; the US regularly carries out drone attacks against the jihadists.

## **Egypt**

### **Death sentences for Muslim Brotherhood members**

On 02.12.14, a court has sentenced 185 Muslim Brotherhood members to death for an attack on a police station in June 2013. On 07.12.14, four high-rank members of the organisation were sentenced to death for participating in the killing of protesters during the rioting near the Muslim Brotherhood headquarters in June 2013. The sentences are subject to the approval of the Grand Mufti, Egypt's highest Sunni Muslim authority. The definite decision is due to be taken on 28.12.14.

## **Libya**

### **IS training camp in Libya**

On 03.12.14, General David Rodriguez (head of U.S. Africa Command) said that IS activities in eastern Libya were 'nascent'. Around a couple hundred local militia militants were present at the training camps which have been set up out there, he said. It was not yet clear, he added, what the militants were planning, but the US military would watch the training camps very carefully to see how they developed, he stated.

## **Nigeria**

### **Boko Haram attack on Damaturu claims over 150 lives**

In the early morning hours of 01.12.14, Boko Haram fighters attacked the city of Damaturu (capital of northeastern Yobe State). They set fire to the police area command office and to the police mobile base. More than 150 people lost their lives, among them 38 policemen and six soldiers.

### **More than 20 girls abducted in Lassa**

On 03.12.14, Boko Haram insurgents captured the town of Lassa, Borno State (Askira/Uba Local Government Area), after several days of fierce fighting with local civil defence volunteers. When retreating from the town, the attackers killed several civilians and abducted more than 20 girls.

### **Boko Haram attacks in Gombe State**

In the morning of 04.12.14, Boko Haram insurgents attacked the town of Bajoga (administrative seat of Funakaye Local Government Area, Gombe State) in a convoy of around 20 vehicles, killing several civilians. They looted two banks and set fire to administration buildings, a police station and a party office. Then they went to the nearby town of Ashaka and stormed a cement works owned by French Lafarge Group. Citing a staff member, AFP news agency reported that the attackers took several company vehicles and an ambulance along with drugs from the factory clinic. The Nigerian army, however, said that the attackers had to withdraw from Ashaka after fierce fighting with the Nigerian military, in which more than 70 Boko Haram insurgents and ten soldiers were killed. Boko Haram members had raided the factory already on 04.11.14, seizing large quantities of industrial dynamite.

## **DR Congo**

### **New civilian massacre in Beni area**

In the night of 08.12.14 a total of 36 villagers were killed by attackers armed with axes and machetes in three villages in eastern North Kivu province near the district capital of Beni (one of the villages being Ahili, roughly 10 km away from the town of Oicha). The Islamist rebel ADF ('Allied Democratic Forces'), which had originally started its activities in Uganda, is blamed for the attack. Since the beginning of October 2014, this group is held responsible for the deaths of more than 250 villagers in the Beni area.

## **Somalia**

### **Attacks**

On 03.12.14, a suicide attack launched on a UN convoy near Mogadishu airport killed at least two security officers and two civilians. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the strike.

On 04.12.14, suspected al-Shabaab members shot dead an ex-member of parliament. Apparently, also a current member of parliament was wounded.

On 05.12.14, at least ten people lost their lives in attacks in the town of Baidoa. One of the attackers blew himself up in front of a café. Bystanders trying to help were killed when a car exploded in front of the café shortly afterwards. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attacks.

### **Vote of no confidence**

On 06.12.14, the Somali parliament ousted prime minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed in a vote of no confidence (153 to 80, with two abstentions). President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud must nominate a new prime minister within 30 days. Until then, Abdiweli Sheikh Amed will stay in office.

## **Sudan**

### **Opposition politician arrested**

The Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service NISS have arrested several members of a group who have signed a political communiqué agreed on 03.12.14 in Addis Ababa. Apparently, the head of the opposition National Consensus Forces, the chairman of the Sudanese Civil Society Initiative and a high-rank member of the SPLM-N (Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, offspring of the South Sudanese SPLM, active in the north) were all detained. The president of Sudan Human Rights Monitor was also arrested.

Among the signatories of the communiqué were also Minni Minawi, vice president of the SRF (Sudan Revolutionary Front, merger of the three Darfur rebel groups JEM, SLA/MM, SLA/AW with the SPLA/N which is fighting in the areas bordering South Sudan) and Sadiq el-Mahdi, leader of the National Umma Party (NUP). The paper is an update of the so-called Paris Declaration of August 2014. Among other things, the opposition calls for an end to the internal conflict, a democratic transformation of the present one-party system and the re-establishment of civil liberties.

After the signature of the Paris Declaration, the Sudanese authorities had arrested Maryam el-Mahdi, daughter of Sadiq el-Mahdi and deputy NUP leader, on her return. After one month, she was released from prison without charges. Her father has not returned to Sudan.

## **Kenya**

### **ICC withdraws charges against President Kenyatta**

On 05.12.14, ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda dropped all charges against Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, saying there was not enough evidence to put him on trial. The proceedings were terminated after witnesses had changed their initial testimony or were no longer willing to give evidence. Ms Bensouda accused the Kenyan government of having impeded their investigation and intimidated witnesses. President Kenyatta had been charged with crimes against humanity in the post-violence election in 2007. At the time, more than 1,000 people had been killed and 600,000 displaced. President Kenyatta was the first sitting head of state to appear before the ICC.

### **Massacre in quarry near Mandera**

In the night of 02.12.14, al-Shabaab insurgents raided a camp of quarry workers near the town of Mandera and killed 36 non-Muslim workers. Shortly afterwards, the militia claimed responsibility for the attack in the area located in the northern part of the country near the border to Somalia and Ethiopia. Following the incident, police chief David Kimaiyo resigned from office on the same day. Also, President Uhuru Kenyatta dismissed interior minister Ole Lenku and nominated former General Joseph Nkaissery as his successor.

On 01.12.14, armed men shot dead one individual and injured several others in a night club in the city of Wajir (county neighbouring Mandera).

### **Outbreaks of violence in 2014**

On 04.12.14, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warned of rising conflicts as a result of inter-communal conflicts attributed to revenge attacks, competition over land and water resources, cattle rustling and struggling over political representation. Between January and end-October 2014, 310 people lost their lives, 241 were injured and 220,177 fled their homes, the UN stated. Violence was increasingly severe in the northern Rift Valley and in the northeastern regions of the country.

## **Russian Federation/Northern Caucasus**

### **Attack claims many lives in Grozny**

On 04.12.14, the Chechen capital Grozny saw the bloodiest fights between Islamic extremists and Russian security forces in years. First, suspected Islamists shot dead three policemen at a street post, and then barricaded themselves in a publishing house. When police attacked the multi-storey building, a fire broke out. State TV showed pictures of the burning building. Apparently, the multi-hour fighting claimed the lives of 14 policemen, injuring at least 28 more. Also, ten Islamists were said to have been killed. These fights in Grozny have claimed more lives than fighting in all of Chechnya in 2014 to date. The head of the Chechen republic Ramsan Kadyrov said that the armed extremists had planned a major terrorist attack. The Islamist group Caucasus Emirate has claimed responsibility for the assault.

### **Background**

The attack in the centre of the Chechen capital is considered a serious setback for the Kremlin, which claims have pacified the former civil war region. The attack occurred just a few hours before President Putin's state-of-the-nation address. He responded immediately in TV, expressing his conviction that the terrorists would be liquidated by the security forces.

### **Russian investigation against Ukrainian MPs**

In connection with the attack in Chechnya's capital Grozny, the Russian judiciary has opened an investigation against three Ukrainian parliamentarians, accusing them of public justification of terrorism. The highest investigating authority in Moscow issued arrest warrants for Yuri Beryoza, Andrei Levus (both members of the governing People's Front Party) and for Ihor Mosiychuk (Radical Party). In Russia, terrorists and their supporters were either sentenced or, in case of resistance, 'liquidated', the spokesman of the authority Vladimir Markin said.

## **Azerbaijan**

### **Human rights journalist arrested**

On 05.12.14, internationally renowned investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova was arrested. A court in Baku ruled that the journalist be remanded in custody for two months.

She is held responsible for a colleague's attempted suicide. For years, the state has put pressure on Ms Ismayilova, making various accusations and instigating legal proceedings against her. In September, she had given a report on the human rights situation in Azerbaijan in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Returning home, Ms Ismayilova was arrested at Baku Airport and questioned for several hours. On 12.10.14, a ban on leaving the country was imposed on her.

In June, human rights activist Leyla Yunus and her husband were arrested. The European Parliament has urged for her release.

On 07.12.14, the President's press officer stated in an interview that, in Azerbaijan, no citizen or representative of mass media has ever been persecuted for expressing his or her opinion or put under pressure by an authority for this reason.

## **India**

### **Human Rights Watch report condemns ill-treatment of women suffering from disabilities**

On 03.12.14, Human Rights Watch (HRW) presented a new report saying that women and girls with disabilities are often subjected to compulsory hospitalization and ill-treatment in India. Many of the victims are downright dumped in institutions, because the government does not provide for adequate assistance, the report goes on ("Treated Worse than Animals: Abuse against Women and Girls with Psychosocial or Intellectual Disabilities in Institutions in India"). HRW documents cases of abuse, sexual violence, forced treatment – including electroconvulsive therapy – and forcible admission to mental hospitals. Also, the report criticizes a lack of hygiene in the institutions.

To draw up the report, more than 200 women and girls with disabilities were interviewed in six cities and 24 institutions visited between December 2012 and November 2014. HRW says that there are no official figures available on psychosocial disorders or mental disabilities. The 2011 census gave an estimated incidence rate of 2.21% for all sorts of disabilities. According to the World Health Organisation, there are three psychiatrists per one million people and one psychologist per two million. India has just 28,000 beds available in institutions and psychiatric wards, with a population of 1.25 billion.

### **Maoist attack leaves 13 policemen dead**

On 01.12.14, Maoist rebels attacked a patrol of the paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh state close to the border with Odisha, killing 14 policemen. The incident is the heaviest attack at CRPF members this year.

## **China**

### **Situation in Hong Kong**

On 03.12.14, the initiators of the Occupy Central movement announced the end of their protests. Benny Tai, Chan Kin-man, Chu Yiu-ming and several fellow campaigners surrendered to the police, taking responsibility for having participated in illegal demonstrations. A short time later, they were released without being charged. Several students, who have been dominating the situation and pushing the Occupy Central movement into the background since the street occupations began in September, are still continuing their activities, but their number is shrinking. Student leader Joshua Wong Chi-fung went on hunger strike from 01.12.14 to 06.12.14.

## **Vietnam**

### **Blogger arrested**

Vietnamese blogger Nguyen Quang Lap was taken into custody after police searched his home. His wife and his brother said that he was accused of publishing articles containing criticism of state authorities. The BBC said that, unlike many bloggers detained in the past, Nguyen Quang Lap was part of the mainstream of Vietnamese literature, regularly appearing on state media and winning state-backed prizes. His blog served as a platform where he and his friends expressed sometimes critical views about Vietnam. A week before, Hong Le Tho had been fined for publishing anti-Chinese statements on 29.11.14.