

Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

17 June 2013

Afghanistan

Bombings in Kabul

A suicide bomber killed at least 17 people and injured dozens in front of the Supreme Court in Kabul on 11 June 2013. Allegedly the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. This is the second major attack of the insurgents in Kabul following only two days after the assault on the international airport on 10 June 2013 (see BN of 10 June 2013).

German Federal Army withdraws from Baghlan province

On 15 June 2013 the German Federal Army cleared the Operation Point North (about 70 km west of Kundus) in Baghlan province that is shaken by unrest. From now on 250 Afghan soldiers will be responsible for operating OP North. The hand-over of the base is part of the scaling down of troops in Afghanistan. The camp in Kundus is to be closed down in fall and responsibility will be assigned to the Afghan security forces.

Iraq

Security situation

The violence continues. In a new wave of violence many people were killed and injured in predominantly Sunni areas on 10 June 2013. Reports vary between a minimum of 70 and 94 and over 230 to 289 fatalities. In one incident in Mosul (Ninive province) five car bombs killed at least 29 people. It is said that the attacks mainly targeted the security forces. In Jadida al-Shat (Judaida al-Shat) near Baquba in Diyala province several bombs exploded on a vegetable market claiming at least 15 lives and wounding 50. Also the cities of Kirkuk, Tikrit, and Tuz Khormatu (Salahaddin province) were affected.

On 11 June 2013 22 people lost their lives and 13 were injured by bombings in the provinces of Ninive, Diyala, Anbar, and Kirkuk.

On 12 June 2013 13 people, including six policemen were killed in Baquba (Diyala province).

An attack on "Camp Liberty", a camp of the Iranian People's Mujahedeen, claimed at least four lives. According to UN figures the camp is home to about 3,100 Iranians.

16 June 2013 saw several attacks on predominantly Shiite areas from which the police and doctors reported about 30 deaths. Most affected were the cities of Basra, Nassirija, greater Bagdad, Najaf, Tuz, Al-Kut, Hilla, and Mosul.

Pakistan

At least 25 fatalities in attacks in Balochistan

A female suicide bomber blew herself up in a bus in Quetta on 15 June 2013 killing 14 female students of Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University. When 19 of the people wounded in the explosion were taken to hospital another suicide bomber staged an attack there killing at least eleven people, including Quetta's deputy police commissioner. It is reported that the assassin was waiting for the wounded to arrive in the emergency room of Bolan Medical Complex Hospital. After a shoot-out of several hours between the police and other extremists that occupied part of the hospital, 35 hostages could be liberated.

The Sunni extremist grouping Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) claimed responsibility for the attacks. A LeJ spokesman said that the bombings were retaliation for the death of five extremists, including two women who had been killed by police during a raid on 06 June 2013. The police informed that these victims had been members of Tehreek-e-Taleban, an extremist organisation with ties to LeJ.

The Quetta attacks have been the latest in a series of assaults on Shiites and Shiite institutions in Baluchistan. Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University is located close to a residential area of Shiite Hazara and many of the students are members of this minority.

Attack on memorial for the state founder

Several hours prior to the Quetta attacks extremists had shot mortars at and almost completely destroyed the house in which the founder of the state of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, had died and which now is a memorial in the village of Ziarat. Allegedly the Balochistan Liberation Army which is fighting for the province's independence from Islamabad, claimed responsibility. One policeman died in the attack.

Syria

US ready to supply arms to insurgents /Russia maintains support for the regime

According to findings of the US intelligence service the regime used toxic gas against the rebels several times, killing between 100 and 150 people. For this reason the US decided on 13 June 2013 to supply arms to the insurgents. The distribution of arms is to be controlled by the US foreign secret service CIA. Further the US is considering a no-fly zone. Serious confrontations regarding the civil war are expected at the two-day G8 Summit starting in Northern Ireland on 17 June 2013, because Russia confirmed its support for Bashar al-Assad, accused the US of lying about the use of chemical weapons and warned of arms shipments. According to the United Nations' most recent figures more than 93,000 people have been killed in Syria so far.

Iran

Rouhani wins presidential elections

The moderate cleric Hassan Rouhani was elected president already in the first round of the elections on 14 June 2013 by winning 50.7% of the vote. Rouhani who served as senior negotiator in the nuclear programme talks until 2005 and as the president's security advisor, is supported by reformists and moderates. He advocates the continuation of Iran's nuclear programme and at the same time he wants to ease tensions with the West and to work towards the lifting of the economic sanctions imposed by the EU and the US. The conservative Teheran mayor Mohammed Bagher Ghalibaf came in second of the six candidates with 16.5% of the vote.

Amnesty International: Human rights report

A recent Amnesty International report of 12 June 2013 describes how the Iranian regime dealt with its critics in the advent of the presidential elections. The report talks of arbitrary arrests, unfair trials and torture. Activists, trade unionists, and journalists had been massively persecuted. Amnesty International describes a wave of repressions saying that also during the election campaign there had been widespread violations of human rights. In some cases people, who had never been politically active, had been detained merely for their opinions.

Palestinian Autonomous Areas

Israel and Palestinians agree on renewal of economic cooperation

On 16 June 2013 Israel and the Palestinian government agreed to resume their economic cooperation that had been suspended several months ago. Joint investments and closer trade relations are to be discussed. Israel committed to pay out the amount collected as taxes on behalf of the Palestinian leadership every month. Israel had suspended the transfer of these tax payments from December 2012 to March 2013 in response to the UN General Assembly granting observer status to the Palestinians.

Turkey

Protests continue

Violent clashes between protesters and the police continued last week in the dispute about the development plans for Istanbul's Gezi Park. It is said that just on Taksim Square in Istanbul at least 30 people were injured and dozens arrested on 11 June 2013. A few hours before the clashes Prime Minister Erdogan had announced that his tolerance had come to an end and called upon the demonstrators to end their protests and to clear the area. Then the Turkish government said it was open to compromise. After Erdogan met with representatives of the so-called Taksim platform in Ankara in the night to 14 June 2013, government spokesman Hüseyin Çelik announced the government would await the final decision of the court that had ordered the halt of construction. The government would be prepared to accept the decision, if the halt of construction was to be confirmed, he said. However, if the court allowed the construction to continue the final decision would be up to the population in a referendum. The demonstrators, however, declined to leave Gezi Park, because one of their major demands, punishment of those responsible for the violent police operations, had not been met. In the night to 16 June 2013 the security forces cleared Gezi Park and Taksim Square injuring hundreds of people in the process, as the protest movement said. Despite this, demonstrations continued on 16 June 2013 and again the protesters and the police clashed. There are reports that government supporters attacked anti-government demonstrators. The Istanbul Bar Association announced that numerous people had been arrested since 15 June 2013. Violent confrontations between government critics and the security forces also occurred in other Turkish cities. In response more than hundred thousand Erdogan-followers manifested their support for him in a rally in Istanbul.

According to the medical association four people have been killed and about 5,000 wounded as a result of police violence against demonstrators since the end of May.

Libya

Fighting in Benghazi

In the night to 15 June 2013 a Libyan special forces unit had a shoot-out with armed demonstrators in the eastern city of Benghazi during which six soldiers were killed, according to the military.

Security forces' spokesman wounded

In an assault on 12 June 2013 the spokesman of the security forces' crisis management staff of the city of Benghazi, Colonel Abdullah al-Shaafi, was wounded. The government had set up the crisis management staff in Benghazi only a few weeks ago in response to the deterioration of security there.

Kosovo

German Federal Army mandate extended

On 13 June 2013 the German Parliament resolved with a large majority to extend the NATO mission in Kosovo that had started in 1999. Defence Minister Thomas de Maizière said that nothing had change regarding the need for the involvement of the German armed forces as part of NATO. Although the situation was generally quiet and stable, one had to be prepared in case of further unrest. According to the agreement between Serbia and Kosovo of 19 April 2013 that was mediated by the EU, the Serbian minority in northern Kosovo is to be integrated into the state of Kosovo. Parts of the Kosovo-Serbian population, however, reject this and therefore the situation remains tense. Currently 5,500 NATO soldiers are deployed. The largest share of the troops is contributed by Germany that at the moment has 830 soldiers on the ground. The ceiling is a maximum contingent of 1,850 men.

Russian Federation

Parliament adopts law on homosexuals and blasphemy

By a large majority the Russian parliament (Duma) adopted a law on homosexuality and blasphemy on 11 June 2013.

To protect young people anyone taking a positive stance on homosexuals or homosexuality in public is risking a fine or a prison sentence. Foreigners may be expelled. Media reporting on gays and lesbians can be forced to shut down operations for three months. Internationally these provisions are highly controversial. The law was criticized by Foreign Minister Westerwelle and the Federal Government's Human Rights Commissioner, Markus Löning.

Legislation on blasphemy was tightened as a result of the protest of the "Pussy Riot" punk band in a Moscow cathedral. In future not only prison sentences will be imposed but also high fines in similar cases. The law provides that it is an offence to "act in public in a way that without any doubt expresses disrespect for society and is intended to hurt the religious feelings of the faithful". If such acts are committed at religious locations the prison sentence can be up to three years.

The laws will only enter into force after being adopted by the Federal Council (Upper Chamber) and signed into law by the president.

Mali

France announces peace plan

According to information from the French foreign ministry of 12 June 2013 an agreement has been drafted that is an "excellent basis for reconciliation". The draft respected the country's unity and provided for elections by end of July, the ministry said. It had already been approved by the Tuareg organisation MNLA and was currently examined by Mali's president.

Niger

Prison escape of terrorists

Several suspected terrorists escaped in a mass jailbreak in the capital Niamey. Among them probably also the Malian Cheibane Ould Hama escaped who was convicted in June 2012 for being responsible for the death of four citizens of Saudi-Arabia and one US citizen. He had been sentenced to 20 years in prison. The Arab broadcasting station Al-Jazeera reported that a total of 22 inmates broke free. According to government information the prison break had occurred already on 02 June 2013 and in its course three guards were killed and several wounded. First investigations revealed that arms had been smuggled into the prison.

Sudan/South Sudan

Tensions between Sudan and South Sudan

Southern Sudanese sources said that Sudanese military penetrated about ten kilometres deep into Southern Sudanese territory on 10 June 2013. On its part Khartoum declared void nine agreements with South Sudan about security and economic cooperation. Already on 09 June 2013 Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir had ordered a stop of oil shipments and the closure of the pipeline running from South Sudan to Port Sudan. Sudan accuses the South of supporting the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF). The SRF is a merger of several rebel organisations operating in Darfur and along the border between the north and the south.

Ethiopia/Eritrea

Rising number of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia

More and more Eritreans are taking refuge in northern Ethiopia. The number of refugees that arrived from the neighbouring country this year is estimated to be 4,000 to date. To provide them with housing the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has set up another camp in cooperation with the Ethiopian gov-

ernment. The existing camps that are already housing 49,000 people are totally overcrowded, they said. The Hitsats refugee camp in the Tigray region is to accommodate up to 20,000 people in the future. The UNHCR informed that many of the refugees are unaccompanied minors who required special care. Also many well trained young men arrived in the camps as they tried to escape the military service in their country that was for an indefinite period.

Rwanda/Germany

Indictment of suspected FDLR members

The German Prosecutor General informed on 11 June 2013 that it had indicted three German citizens for suspected membership in the terrorist organisation FDLR (Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda) on 27 May 2013. They are charged with having spreading the FDLR's ideology in press releases since May 2011. They are suspected of having formed a FDLR cell in Germany and of attempting to take on at least part of the role of the FDLR leadership who has been arrested in 2009 and 2010 in Germany and France and whose trials are still pending. The accused had been arrested on 05 December 2012. Two of them are held in custody awaiting trial. Investigations are continued against eleven other supporters.