

Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

15 April 2013

Pakistan

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province: more than 140 casualties

On 13 April 2013 a bomb exploded near Mattani Bazar in Peshawar which killed nine and wounded ten people when a van with passengers drove by at the time of the explosion.

The security forces continued their operation against the terror organization of the Taliban in Pakistan (TTP) and their associates, the Lashkar-i-Islam (LI), in the remote Akka Khel area in the Tirah valley (sub-district Bara) in the Khyber Agency (FATA). So far the security forces and a local anti-Taliban militia supporting them have lost 23 men. The terror organizations lost 110 men. The fighting is most intensive on the border to the FATA Agency Orakzai. The TTP and LI had fallen out over the succession of the TTP leader Tariq Afridi who was killed a few months ago. During the security forces' operations against the two groups they came to an agreement and assigned the command for the TTP fighters in Khyber Agency to Mangal Bagh, LI's leader. On 12 April 2013 the Pakistani Taliban succeeded in winning back some territory. Three Taliban and two members of the pro-government militia died in this operation.

A policeman was killed and another one wounded on 10 April 2013 in an armed attack on a polio vaccination team in the area of Mosam-Koroono in the district of Mardan near the Afghan border. The vaccination team was not injured.

Pakistani Taliban started attacking politicians

On 14 April 2013 a leading local politician of the Awami National Party (ANP) was killed by Taliban militants in Swat (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province = KPK). A manifestation of the same party near Peshawar was the target of another attack in which eight people were injured. On 1 April 2013 a raid of a manifestation of ANP in Bannu (KPK) claimed two lives, left several people injured, including the constituency's candidate for the National Assembly. Furthermore some time ago a former deputy of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) was killed in Karachi and a candidate for the upcoming elections in Hyderabad.

The Taliban in Pakistan had recently announced that they would take action against secular parties, i.e. ANP, MQM and the Pakistan Peoples Party.

Iraq

Security situation

On 10 April 2013 five members of the security forces were killed in an attack in Mosul (Ninive province). A civilian became the victim of a bomb explosion in Baquba (Diyala province). At least twelve people died and over 20 were injured in a bomb attack on a Sunni mosque in Baquba (Diyala province) on 12 April 2013. A series of attacks on 15 April 2013, including on Baghdad international airport, in Slahaddin province, and in Kirkuk resulted in several casualties and many wounded.

dpa news agency reported on 15 April 2013 that the UN Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) announced that 456 people had been killed in March, among them 227 members of the security forces.

Renewed attacks on Iraqi regional politicians

On 14 April 2013 more candidates for the regional elections were killed and a large number withdrew their candidacy after receiving death threats.

More death sentences

According to a press release of 10 April 2013 a court in Al-Kut (Wassit province) sentenced three men to death by hanging. Allegedly they participated in a car bombing of members of the army in September 2012.

Amnesty International reports that the number of death sentences and executions increased in Iraq in 2012. The report said that at least 68 death sentences were executed in 2011, and at least 129 in 2012.

Syria

Many Europeans fighting for the insurgents/Fighters from Germany killed

A study of the „International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation“ concludes that a significant number of the foreign fighters are Europeans. It says that 140 to 600 of the roughly 2,000 to 5,000 foreigners fighting on the insurgent's side come from Europe, including up to 40 from Germany. The death by gunshot of a Chechen living in Kiel/Germany on 24 January 2013 became known only now, he probably had joined the insurgents.

Attack in Damascus

A car bomb in a Damascus business district killed more than 15 and wounded 53 people on 8 April 2013. The bomb was planted directly in front of a school in the town quarter in which the Finance Ministry and the Central Bank are located.

Indications of the use of chemical weapons

Allegedly British military experts have found traces in soil samples from the vicinity of Damascus that prove the use of chemical weapons. They did not disclose what substance was found and which side used it. The government and the insurgents accuse each other of using chemical weapons. The Syrian government denied entry to a UN team of experts for chemical weapons, although it had previously requested the team. In December 2012 US-President Obama had urgently warned Syrian President Assad against crossing a 'red line' by using chemical weapons.

West Bank

Prime Minister Fayyad resigned

After six years in the office of Prime Minister Fayyad resigned on 13 April 2013. He had been criticized that economic growth had merely been fiction from which only the construction sector and some services had benefitted, while the majority of the population had suffered from rising prices. Finally Fayyad was accused of bearing some of the blame for the Palestinian Authority's financial difficulties. The economic expert Muhammad Mustafa who heads the public investment fund and the linguist and President of Nablus University, Rami Hamdallah, were named as his potential successors.

Iran

The trend indicates more executions

Human rights organizations have again drawn attention to the high number of executions in Iran. Western observers think that the argument of Iran's judiciary that this is "what the law provides", in particular related to drug crimes, is merely a pretence. „Iran Human Rights“ (IHR) in cooperation with the French organisation „Jointly against the death penalty“ („Ensemble contre la peine de mort“ - ECPM) submitted its fifth annual report about the death penalty in Iran. With 580 executions in Iran the country ranks top in the number of executions related to the size of its population. Amnesty International had already spoken of a "public shooting spray" of the Iranian judiciary when ten people convicted of drug crimes were executed at the end of

2012. Since March 2012 the London organization has counted 344 executions. The UN rapporteur for Iran, Ahmad Shaheen, assumed the number to be even higher in his report of October 2012.



Turkey

Anti-terrorism laws revised

On 11 April 2013 the Turkish parliament adopted a revision of the country's anti-terrorism laws. After the revision only a direct incitement for violence constitutes an offence. Representatives of the Turkish Ministry of Justice stated that this would meet the requirements of the European Human Rights Court and the EU for more freedom of opinion.

Based on these anti-terrorism laws many politicians, activists and journalist had been prosecuted in the past, some of them merely because of a written or an oral statement.

Incidents during the Ergenekon trial

On 09 April 2013 the police clashed violently with protesters at the trial against alleged putschists. The Turkish press reported the use of irritant gas and water cannons by the police against several thousand supporters of the defendants outside of the prison and court buildings in Silivri west of Istanbul. The supporters had chanted anti-government slogans and attempted to break into the court room. They also used clubs and stones and injured several journalists. The trial against almost 300 suspected members of the secret association Ergenekon was continued in the court room on the prison grounds of Silivri. They are charged with an attempt to overthrow the government of Prime Minister Erdogan in 2003. On the last day of the hearing in March the prosecution pleaded for life prison sentences for the main defendants, including former Chief of Staff Ilker Basbug. The defendants, including journalists, politicians and former generals, are currently making their final statements. The sentence could be pronounced in the next months.

Egypt

Judge in trial against Hosni Mubarak states he is biased

In the second trial against former President Mubarak for the death of over 800 protesters during the 2011 revolution, Presiding Judge Mustafa Hassan Abdallah stated that he was biased a few minutes before the proceedings were to begin on 13 April 2013. He remitted the case to the court of appeal to appoint another judge. In another trial for violent excesses against protesters Abdallah had acquitted 24 former officials of the Mubarak government. At the beginning of the trial several lawyers representing the victim families had demanded that the judge step down.

In 2012 Mubarak and the former Minister of the Interior had been sentenced to life imprisonment and six police officers had been acquitted. This sentence had been set aside by the court of appeal because of a procedural deficiency.

Egyptian military accused of torture

Following reports of the British Guardian of 11 April 2013, a report commissioned by President Mursi in 2012 to investigate acts of violence during the revolution and the subsequent military government, confirms the accusations of torture against the police and the military. It is said that doctors in a military hospital were instructed to operate on wounded protesters without any anaesthetics. Furthermore the military is said to be responsible for the torture and disappearance of opposition members.

Libya

Prime Minister's advisor released

Deputy Prime Minister Abdel-Salam al-Qadi stated that Mohamed Ali Ghatus, Chief of Staff and advisor to Prime Minister Ali Zidan, has been free again since 08 April 2013. No details of Ghatus' kidnapping on 31 March 2013 (initial reports gave the date of 1 April 2013) and his release have become known. On 09 April 2013 the General National Congress adopted a law that makes torture, kidnapping and discrimination because of membership of a class, group, region of origin, gender or colour an offence. The law is directed against transgressions by officials and includes punishments from seven years to life imprisonment.

Islamist militia's leader killed in Darna

On 14 April 2013 Sufyan bin Qumu was shot dead in Darna. He once was an inmate of the US prison camp in Guantanamo Bay and is suspected of involvement in an attack on the US consulate in Benghazi as leader of the Islamist militia called Ansar al-Sharia. No details of the shooting are known.

Former Gaddafi official killed in Darna

Former local secretary of the General People's Congress (Gaddafi's sham parliament), Ali al-Sharie, was killed in a drive-by shooting by unknown assassins in the evening of 10 April 2013 when leaving Hamza mosque in Darna.

Four Egyptian Christians released

On 11 April 2013 four Egyptian Christians were released who had been detained for missionizing. It is said that a fifth Christian died in prison. The charges for missionizing had also been dropped.

Three killed in attack on Sebha police station

The police station in Sebha was attacked on 13 April 2013, three policemen were killed and the attackers took weapons and vehicles. Two weeks earlier two army officers had been killed in an attack on military installations in the city. After the attack on 13 April 2013 seventeen armed men were arrested, however, it remains unclear whether these arrests are related to the attacks.

Clashes in Kufra claim two lives and several wounded

On 07 April 2013 fighting erupted once again in Kufra, an oasis town in the south east. Just as during the last incidence in January 2013 the focus was near the university centre. During the three days of fighting two persons are said to have been killed and several wounded. Minister of the Interior Ashour Shuwail announced that the security forces are in control again, they had, however, been reinforced as a preventive measure. It is unknown what triggered the fighting. Some say, as before, that armed militias were responsible; others say that it was the armed Zway who attacked the Tebou neighbourhood in Kufra.

Kufra is suffering from tensions between the tribes of the Zway (Arab) and the Tebou (black African). The government had mediated a ceasefire between the two ethnic groups in June 2012 that ended confrontations of a much larger scale.

Serbia/Kosovo

Serbia rejects EU plan

One week after the failure of the negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo (see BN of 08 April 2013) the Serbian government again rejected the EU's proposal for an agreement with Kosovo. Serbia refuses to accept the conditions of the negotiation parties saying that the Serbs in Northern Kosovo would need to have access

to the police and the judiciary and no security forces of the Kosovo government should be deployed in the north. At the same time the Serbian government advocated the continuation of the dialogue. It seems that the diplomatic efforts to come to an agreement are being continued.

Future negotiations are aiming at an administrative model for northern Kosovo that respects the Serbian population's desire for autonomy without challenging the sovereignty of Kosovo's government. At this time no solution is perceivable.

Western Balkans

EU parliamentary committee invokes emergency clause to reinstate visa requirement

On 08 April 2013 the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs voted in Brussels that the EU Member States could suspend the exemption from the visa requirement for nationals from certain non-EU countries for a specific period. Six countries - including Germany and France - had applied to the EU to agree on an emergency clause allowing to reintroduce the visa requirement in view of the mounting number of asylum-seekers from the Western Balkan countries. The committee resolved that the EU countries may suspend the exemption from the visa requirement, when there is a "substantial and sudden increase" in the number of illegal immigrants or of unfounded asylum applications, however, only as a "last resort".

The proposal must now be voted on by the plenary assembly of the European Parliament and the Member States. If these support the proposal the Member States would be allowed to suspend the exemption from the visa requirement for their territory 90 days after the resolution's publication in the Official Journal of the EU.

Somalia

IMF recognizes government

On 12 April 2013 the International Monetary Fund officially recognized the Somali government. After an interruption of 22 years this opens up the opportunity for providing technical assistance and political advice to the country.

Al-Shabaab attacks in Mogadishu cause many casualties

Somali security forces reported that at least 29 civilians and all of the nine al-Shabaab suicide bombers were killed in an attack by these and several fighters on the building of the Supreme Court in Mogadishu on 14 April 2013. During the three hours of fighting 58 people were wounded. Shortly after the bombing of the court another car bomb went off on an access road to the Mogadishu airport that killed five people according to the police. Allegedly the attack was aimed against a convoy of the Turkish Red Crescent. Three staff members of the aid organisation are probably among the fatalities.

South Sudan/Sudan

President al-Bashir visits South Sudan

For the first time since the independence of Southern Sudan Sudanese President al-Bashir visited his colleague Salva Kiir Mayardit on 12 April 2013. The meeting, hailed by commentators as a "historic visit", is to advance the reconciliation of both countries and the normalization of their relationship. Salva Kiir said that one had agreed on the resumption of oil business and trade. The negotiations about disputed territories are to be continued.

South Sudan resumed oil deliveries to Sudan

On 13 April 2013 the first oil from Southern Sudan arrived in Sudan since January 2012. In January 2011 South Sudan had stopped its oil production because of disputes over the fees for the use of the Sudanese pipelines to the oil port of Port Said. Both countries had reached a general agreement in August 2012, but the real breakthrough did not happen until March 2013.

Mali

Suicide bombing claims casualties

In Kidal, in north eastern Mali, at least three soldiers from Chad were killed by a suicide bomber on 12 April 2013, four soldiers were seriously injured, the general staff of Chad announced.

Accusations of torture against the military

According to a report by Human Rights Watch of 11 April 2013 two Tuareg and another five of their tribesmen, who had been arrested on 13 February, died in a prison in Bamako. Human Rights Watch states that they had first been tortured by soldiers and then died probably of the extreme heat in their cells in combination with their injuries. The Tuareg had been suspected of supporting Islamist rebels.

Nigeria

Boko Haram rejects amnesty

Abubakar Shekau, the leader of the main fraction of the Islamist terror organization Boko Haram, sent an e-mail to the AFP news agency on 25 April 2013 rejecting any potential amnesty offer of the government and stating that Boko Haram had not done anything wrong. Quite the opposite, he said, the issue would rather be that Boko Haram forgives the government for the cruelties against the Muslims, which he also rejected. On 04 April 2013 President Jonathan had appointed a committee to examine the options for an amnesty offer to Boko Haram and to submit a report in two weeks. During the conflict with Boko Haram more than 3,000 people have died in attacks by the terror organization or operations of the security forces since 2009.

Raid on a police station in the state of Yobe

Armed men, probably members of the radical Islamist organization Boko Haram, attacked the police headquarters in Babangida, administrative capital of the Tarmuwa Local Government Area, in the north-eastern state of Yobe. The police reported that in the fighting five attackers and four policemen died. Other reports say that four policemen and three civilians were killed in the shoot-out and two more policemen were wounded.

MEND warns of anti-Islamic attacks

The militant MEND group („Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta“), that is mostly active in the oil-rich Niger Delta, threatened in an e-mail of its spokesperson Jomo Gbomo of 13 April 2013 to start anti-Islamic attacks after 31 May 2013. The "crusade" code-named "Barbarossa" is to prevent the annihilation of Christianity in Nigeria and shall include the bombings of mosques, haj camps, Islamic institutions, large congregations in Islamic events and assassinations of clerics that propagate doctrines of hate. At the same time MEND announced it would call off the operation, if the "Christian Association of Nigeria" (CAN), the Catholic church or Henry Okah (the former MEND leader sentenced to 24 years imprisonment in South Africa on 26 March 2013) so demanded. They would also call it off, if the leadership of the Islamist terror organization Boko Haram, that is active in northern and central Nigeria, would provide an assurance that they would stop the "hostilities" against Christians. MEND also claimed responsibility for the destruction of oil well 62 on 13 April 2013 in the village of Ewellesuo (Nembe Local Government Area, state of Bayelsa) during operation „Hurricane exodus“.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Officers suspended because of suspected participation in mass rapes

A UN spokesman informed on 11 April 2013 that the Congolese army had suspended and handed over to the military prosecutor twelve officers for suspected involvement in the mass rapes of November 2012 in eastern Congo. According to the investigations by the UN Peace Mission in Congo (MONUSCO) army soldiers raped 126 women in the city of Minova (about 50 km west of the eastern Congolese province North Kivu's capital Goma) between 20 and 30 November 2012 after government troops had fled to Minova when M23 rebels conquered Goma. Many of the rapists could be identified. MONUSCO had called on the Kinshasa

government for the last time on 25 March 2013 to take action because of the mass rapes, otherwise the two battalions involved in them would not receive any support anymore.

Uganda

Ritual murders of children

Increasing numbers of ritual murders of children. A lecturer of Kampala University stated that mainly birds and small animals had been killed in rituals until a few years ago. Nowadays Ugandan businessmen want to have a kind of "blood insurance" by committing a ritual murder prior to their next major project. The children rights organisation "Humane Africa" reported that the young victims are usually still alive when parts of their body are cut off.

Central African Republic

Rebel leader becomes the new president/situation is tense

Three weeks after the ousting of the government, rebel leader Michel Djotodia officially assumed the office of President of the Central African Republic. In an open vote without any opposing candidate the National Transition Council, formed after the coup, elected him president. The Council includes representatives of many political and social groups. Djotodia promised to hold elections within 18 weeks. The interim government formed two weeks ago also includes a member of the party of the exiled President François Bozizé. The rebel alliance Séléka had ousted Bozizé accusing him of not honouring a peace agreement.

The Red Cross reported that at least 17 people died in the unrest on 14 April 2013. Although the new President announced that he wants to establish peace and quiet, the population is scared of the heavily armed fighters. Ten thousands are still fleeing.

UNICEF stated that there is "clear evidence that children are being recruited by armed groups all the time". Humanitarian aid is also affected by looting and armed robberies.

China

Executions

In the global statistics for executions in 2012 published by Amnesty International on 10 April 2013 China ranks first - ahead of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the US. As already in 2009 the organization does not give a specific figure for China, but assumes that there were thousands of executions; which are more than in all other countries combined (682). The number of executions is handled as a state secret in China.

Myanmar

Violence against Muslims

There have been several unconfirmed reports on indications that up to 36 students and the teacher of a Koran school were murdered during the violence against Muslims in Meiktila on 21 March 2013. Their whereabouts are still unknown; reportedly witnesses saw the burning of corpses outside the school. On 02 April 2013 a fire in Rangoon killed 13 students of a Koran school, but according to an official investigation report published on 10 April 2013 it was not caused by arson. Rumours about an attack had caused concern against the background of the recent unrest.

The owners of the shop whose argument with customers triggered the unrest in March (see BN of 25 March 2013) and one of their employees were sentenced to 14 years imprisonment each for robbery and grave bodily injury among other charges on 11 April 2013. According to the Meiktila police a total of 70 persons were arrested in connection with the outbreak of violence, including 28 Muslims and 42 Buddhists.

Anti-Muslim agitation

For months the Buddhist monks of the "969 Movement" have been agitating against Muslims. The figure 969 symbolizes several elements of Buddhist faith. In speeches, flyers and on CDs the movement is calling upon

Buddhists to avoid dealing with Muslims and to boycott their businesses; it is also against the marriage of Buddhist women to Muslim men. In contrast to the Rohingya in Rakhine State, the Muslims in central Myanmar, the site of the recent violence between Buddhists and Muslims in March 2013, are often wealthier than their Buddhist neighbours. In Meiktila, where entire streets were destroyed, the Muslims - who make up about 30 percent of the population - owned real estate in prime locations and were prevalent in business. Several observers think that the agitation of the 969 Movement at least contributed to the causes for the possibly organized unrest between Buddhists and Muslims in June and October 2012 and in March 2013. A well-known voice of the movement is the monk Wirathu from a monastery in Mandalay. In 2003 Wirathu had been sentenced to 25 years in prison for inciting violence against Muslims. He was released during an amnesty in 2012. It seems that the 969 Movement can now act largely unhindered. Violence against Muslims, who account for about four to ten percent of the entire population, broke out several times in recent decades, the last times in 2003, 2006, and 2012.