

Group 41 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

18 November 2013

Afghanistan

Security situation

Four civilians were killed in a bombing in Lashkargah, the capital of Helmand province, southern Afghanistan on 14 November 2013.

On 16 November 2013, a suicide bomber trying to flee security forces chasing him rammed his explosive-laden vehicle into a military vehicle in Kabul, killing four civilians, one policeman and one soldier. 22 people were wounded. The bombing occurred close to the tent where a grand assembly (Loya Jirga) was due to begin on 21 November 2013.

A civilian was killed in a suicide bomb targeting the Deputy-Governor of Balkh province in northern Afghanistan on 17 November 2013. Two other civilians and two body guards were wounded.

Opium production reaches record high

According to information by UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes), opium production has increased by one-third year-on-year, thus reaching a new record high in 2013. Of the 34 provinces in Afghanistan, there are only 15 that are not involved in opium production, two less than the previous year. The largest production areas are located in the South, particularly in Helmand province which is one of the most troubled provinces in Afghanistan. It can be assumed that opium production will double this year. It is estimated that opium production accounts for around 4 percent of Afghanistan's economic output. Around 80 to 90 percent of the opium traded globally comes from Afghanistan.

Loya Jirga discusses security deal

The grand assembly (Loya Jirga) will convene in Kabul on 21 November 2013 to discuss a security deal that will decide if America and its allies will keep troops in Afghanistan after 2014. The Taliban have warned delegates from approving a deal that would allow US troops to stay on in Afghanistan. They said anyone agreeing to such a deal will be punished as a "traitor". Negotiations on the status of US troops have been under way for several months. The main bone of contention is the US request that US troops be granted immunity while they are serving in Afghanistan.

Pakistan

Riots between Shia and Sunni Muslims

Heavy riots broke out between Shia and Sunni Muslims in the cities of Rawalpindi, Multan and Chishtian on 15 November 2011 in which nine people died and 90 were wounded. The Shia Muslims will begin celebrating the Ashura feast (a day of mourning for Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed) on 15 November 2013. Sunni Muslims began attacking Shia Muslims as they marched in Rawalpindi. The Pakistani government sent in the Army, imposed a curfew over the weekend and cut mobile communications. Violent clashes erupted at protests in Multan and Chishtian against the events in Rawalpindi.

Iraq

Security situation

Suicide bombings continue to occur in Iraq on a daily basis.

On 11 November 2013, at least 11 people were killed in Mosul and Baghdad.

At least twelve people were killed in suicide bombings in Baghdad and Mosul on 12 November 2013.

On 13 November 2013, between 19 and 50 people were killed and 131 were wounded in attacks waged against Shia pilgrims and security forces, according to varying reports. The deadliest attack was carried out near Tikrit, killing at least ten people. Further bombings took place near Baquba.

Up to 60 people were killed on 14 November 2013 in coordinated attacks against Shia pilgrims.

On 15 November 2013, at least nine persons were killed and 20 were wounded in suicide bombings in Baghdad, Mosul, Baquba and Kirkuk.

On 16 November 2013, at least seven persons were killed in Baghdad, Mosul and Saidiya, 15 were wounded.

On 17 November 2013, at least 48 persons were killed and 116 were wounded in suicide bombings that took place in Baghdad, Tuz Khurmato, Mosul and Baquba. The highest number of casualties was reported in Baghdad and Tuz Khurmato.

Iraqi bishops criticize departure visas being issued

According to a press release, the bishops in Iraq are accusing other countries of encouraging Christians to leave the region. The bishops criticised the fact that foreign embassies and consulates are favouring Christians in the issuing of visas allowing citizens to leave Iraq. They say the churches in Iraq are encouraging people to stay. They say everything is being done to help people find work and accommodation.

Syria

Suicide attack in the centre of Damascus and on military base

At least three people were killed and 22 were wounded in a suicide bombing in the centre of Damascus on 14 November 2013 when two bombs exploded and artillery shells were fired close to Omayyaden mosque. According to Syrian activists, at least 31 persons were killed, including several Generals, in an attack on a military base near Damascus on 17 November 2013.

Army pushes rebels back

Government troops carried on advancing into rebel territories in the North and South of Syria last week. The Army reportedly brought the town of Hujaira south of Damascus under its control following three days of fighting, advancing into the southern suburbs of the capital. Clashes broke out with rebels close to Aleppo in the village of Hasel. Government troops advanced in the al-Kalamun region with the support of Hezbollah militants. This advance has triggered a new wave of refugees fleeing to Lebanon. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has rejected all demands for his rebels to withdraw from Syria.

Opposition in exile appoints cabinet members

According to a statement issued by the Syrian National Coalition on 12 November 2013, a government has been appointed for the areas controlled by rebels following three-day negotiations in Istanbul. The cabinet of nine will probably operate from the Turkish border city of Gaziantep. Ejad al-Kudsi was elected deputy to the head of the interim government Achmend Tumeh who was elected in September (cf. BN of 16 September 2013). Some ministerial posts have yet to be filled. The influence of the National Coalition on the disparate rebel factions is considered to be patchy at best.

Peace conference planned for December 2013

A second peace conference is to take place in Geneva on 12 December 2013. The opposition alliance Syrian National Coalition agreed on 11 November 2013 to participate in a conference if Assad renounces power and is excluded from any interim government. The terms of the opposition were rejected last week by the Syrian government, referring to the final statement issued at the first Geneva Conference in June 2012 (cf. BN of 2 July 2012).

Turkey

ECHR ruling

On 12 November 2013, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ordered Turkey to pay EUR 2.3 million to victims of the bombing of two Kurdish villages in March 1994 in which 33 persons were killed. The judges granted the motions of 41 applicants - who are relatives of those killed - and rejected the Turkish government's efforts to blame the attack on the outlawed separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (KWP). The judgement is not yet final, with Turkey having three months to appeal.

Israel/Palestinian Autonomous Territories

Plans to build settler homes cancelled

Israel has cancelled plans to build 20,000 new settler homes in the West Bank, following harsh criticism from the international community. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on 12 November 2013 that plans would be reviewed. In a statement issued by Netanyahu's office, it said the plans had been published by the Housing Ministry without his knowledge. The Palestinians leaders had threatened to pull out of the Middle East peace negotiations. US Secretary of State John Kerry had harshly criticised Israel's plans to build new settler homes last week during a three-day peace-brokering mission to the Middle East.

Egypt

Court lifts state of emergency

The Supreme Administrative Court in Cairo ruled that a three-month state of emergency be lifted on 12 November 2013. It would have expired on 14 November 2013. The state of emergency allowed the authorities to arrest people without a warrant and to search their homes without a judicial order. The curfew stretched from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m., apart from Fridays, when it began at 7 p.m. and last until 5.00 a.m. The Egyptian interim President Adli Mansour who imposed the state of emergency is planning to draft legislation to regulate demonstrations.

Algeria

Bouteflika nominated again as presidential candidate

The incumbent President Abdelaziz Bouteflika who has been in office for 14 years has been nominated once again as presidential candidate by this party. The Central Committee of the National Liberation Front (FLN) announced on 16 November 2013 in Algiers that it has nominated Bouteflika again.

Tunisia

Police action against Islamists and self-immolation

Special forces of the Tunisian police took action against Islamists on 12 November 2013 along the border with Libya who were undergoing training and receiving arms, according to public authorities. One member of the Islamist group was killed and eight suspects were detained. Since a suicide bomber blew himself up in the tourist resort of Sousse on 30 October 2013, the first suicide bombing to occur in many years, the Tunisian government has been cracking down on extremists. On 11 November 2013, a man tried to set himself on fire in front of a government building in Tunis as a sign of protest. He was taken to hospital suffering from severe burns.

Libya

General strike following clashes

The city council declared a three-day general strike for all areas of the public and private sector on 17 November 2013 following bloodshed between protestors and militiamen in Tripoli on 15 November 2013. Militiamen has opened fire on people taking part in a protest against militiamen on 15 November 2013. Citizens then took up arms and took part in fights with militiamen that lasted for many hours until the Army stepped in. At least 43 people were killed and over 400 were wounded. Further fighting took place in a suburb of the city the next day between rival militiamen in which several persons were killed and many were wounded.

Uganda

Activist charged

The leading lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights activist Sam Ganafa and four other persons were arrested on 12 November 2013. Sam Ganafa was charged on 15 November 2013. A Ugandan man claimed he had infected him with AIDS.

Cameroon

Priest abducted

A French priest was abducted in Nguetchewe (in the North of Cameroon close to the border with Nigeria) in the early hours of 14 November 2013. French media announced on 16 November 2013, quoting Nigerian sources, that the Nigerian rebel organisation Boko Haram had claimed responsibility for the abduction.

Somalia

Tropical storm causes serious damage in Puntland

On 10 November 2013, a serious tropical storm swept through the North-East of Somalia. It has been reported that 143 people had been killed and more than 150 had gone missing by 13 November 2013. Many homes have been destroyed. A lot of cattle were lost in the area that is dependent on livestock. The President of the region has declared a state of emergency. He said there is a lack of drinking water, food and medication as well as blankets and material for emergency accommodation.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Peace agreement with M23 fails

On the evening of 11 November 2013, the Congolese delegation announced suddenly that it would not be signing the peace agreement between Congo and the M23 rebel organisation in Entebbe/Uganda. The deal had been thrashed out over several months with Uganda mediating talks. According to the official version, Congo's government objected to the title "peace agreement" instead of the "peace declaration" it had insisted upon. As the M23 have been conquered and had declared the armed battle over themselves, it said it could not conclude an agreement with a group that no longer exists. On 13 November 2013, Congo said it was only willing to sign a "declaration" issued by the M23 rebels declared them defeated.

The envisaged peace agreement offered to reintegrate simple M23 rebels into the government army and contained provisions for the future fate of around 100 M23 Commanders, some of whom have been accused of serious human rights violations.

Nigeria

Boko Haram and ANSARU on US list of terrorist organisations

The US State Department formally designated the Nigerian Islamist militant group Boko Haram and the splinter group ANSARU as "foreign terrorist organisations" on 13 November 2013. The move makes it a crime under US law to provide "material support" to the group. Furthermore, it has been made easier for the US to conduct investigations and to raise charges against the organisations. The US authorities have been instructed to block business and financial transactions with the groups and to freeze their assets.

Kosovo

No new incidents at re-run of elections in Mitrovica

Strict security measures have prevented new riots at the re-run of local elections. After polling stations were raided two weeks ago, Serbian voters were protected by a large number of security officers this time around. Turnout was low at 22 percent but was high enough to ensure there could be no mention of effective boycott. The fact that the re-run of the local elections was marked by a peaceful atmosphere proves that progress has been made in "normalising" relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which is a condition in the Brussels agreement in April 2013.

Islamist extremists arrested

The Kosovo police have arrested six Kosovo Albanians who are terrorist suspects and who are thought to have links with the Syrian terrorist group al-Nusra (a branch of al-Qaeda). Many arms and explosives were found during a police raid. The group which calls itself "Jihad in Kosovo" issued threats unless the men were released. One of the persons detained reportedly fought in Syria (150 of the just under 1,000 militants who volunteered from Europe are Kosovars).

Kosovo has seen a sharp rise in radical Islam, fuelled by poverty and unemployment. Security experts say they have around 50,000 supporters. The majority of Kosovars (1.8 million) are supporters of Sunni Hanafi Islam which is one of the more tolerant forms of Islam.

West Balkans

Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia "secure countries of origin"

The negotiating parties of the grand coalition want the countries of the West Balkans, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia to be classified as safe countries of origin. The sub-working group Integration and Migration of the parliamentary groups of the CDU, CSU and SPD reached agreement on this. 30,500 persons have filed applications for asylum since the beginning of the year.

Russian Federation

Clashes in Dagestan

Five people were killed in an operation launched by security forces in Dagestan on 16 November 2013. The suicide bomber's husband (cf. BN of 28 October 2013) and four other suspected extremists are said to have been killed in fighting that lasted hours in the capital of Dagestan, Machatshkala. According to the authorities, the husband said during the fighting that he had built the explosive device worn by his wife.

Cambodia/Thailand

International Court of Justice rules on border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia

The International Court of Justice in the Hague ruled on 11 November 2013 that Cambodia should have sovereignty over most of the disputed



land around the Preah Vihear Temple on the border with Thailand. The International Court of Justice in the Hague said Thailand must withdraw troops from around the hilltop temple. The Court had already ruled in 1962 that the Hindu Temple which is a UNESCO World Heritage site was Cambodian. However, sovereignty over the 4.6 square kilometres surrounding the Temple remains unclear. The Armies of both countries have frequently come to blows in the past over the controversial territory.

China

Third plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party decides on reforms

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China approved a decision on a number of economic reforms at a four-day meeting held in Beijing from 9 to 12 November 2013. The closing document of the plenum published on 15 November 2013 also indicates that the family planning policy is to be eased. It was decided to allow couples to have a second baby if either partner is an only child. The current law allows only couples in which both are only children to have a second baby. The re-education through labour camps are to be abolished. Up to now, the police have had the power to send people to labour camps for up to four years without trial ("re-education through labour" programme known as: lao jiao in Chinese). The number of criminal offences subject to the death penalty is also to be reduced over time. A decision was also taken to establish a national security commission. It will be responsible for interior and exterior security and will deal with military issues, issues relating to public security, foreign policy, secret services and Internet security.

Compulsory treatment in psychiatric institutions

The human rights organisation Chinese Human Rights Defenders announced on 14 November 2013 that activists and petitioners are being admitted to psychiatric institutions where their human rights are being violated. A Mental Health Law which entered into force on 1 May 2013 that is intended to protect patients' rights, among other things, is being repeatedly ignored.

Violence in the Uygur Autonomous Region Xinjiang

On 16 November 2013, nine Uygurs raided a police station in Kashgar prefecture's Siriqbuya township and bludgeoned police officers. They killed two unarmed auxiliary policemen before being shot by security forces.

Myanmar

Amnesty for political prisoners

President Thein Sein granted an amnesty for political prisoners on 15 November 2013. These persons had been identified by a Political Prisoners Assessment Committee that had been asked to identify anyone detained on political grounds. Those released include around two dozen persons who had been detained for organising unapproved protests in recent weeks. Under the Peaceful Assembly Act that was issued in November 2011, all rallies need to be approved in advance. A statement issued by the President's bureau said the committee was working towards ensuring the prerequisites for releasing all political prisoners would be created by the end of December.