

## Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

15 September 2014

### Afghanistan

#### Security situation

The head of the police of Arghistan district in the southern province of Kandahar and two of his body guards were killed and six policemen were wounded in a suicide bombing on 08 September 2014. In Badkshshah province in the north-east (Baharak district) six Afghan soldiers died in a bomb attack. In Maqur district in the western province of Badghis unknown killers assassinated a tribal elder. In Kunduz province in the north ten insurgents lost their lives in fighting. In Farah province in the west two civilians died when their house was hit by a shell. In Kunar province in the east, two civilians died in rocket fire from Pakistan, six civilians were injured.

On 09 September 2014 insurgents started an attack near the border between the eastern provinces of Nuristan and Kunar in which two of them died. In fighting and air raids in Mohammad Agha district in the central province of Logar at least 16 insurgents were killed. In the western province of Badghis an Afghan secret service agent died in an ambush and five others were wounded. Unknown gunmen shot a tribal elder in Maqur district in the eastern province of Ghazni.

In a NATO air strike against the Taliban on 10 September 2014 14 civilians were killed and 13 people injured in the eastern province of Kunar. Also in Kunar province the Taliban burnt down the houses of seven policemen and took a dozen civilians hostage. The Taliban death toll after a month-long military operation in Chahar Dara district in the north eastern province of Kunduz is 130.

On 11 September 2014 the Head of the Office for Pilgrimages and Religious Affairs was attacked in the southern province of Uruzgan.

According to unconfirmed reports seven jihadists died near the village of Komal in Paktia province in a US drone attack on 13 September 2014, among them two commanders of the Badr Mansoor group that has ties to al-Qaeda. Inhabitants of Watapur district in Kunar province said on 14 September 2014 that Mullah Basir, a high-ranking Taliban, died in a drone attack.

#### Formation of government

No agreement could be reached between the presidential candidates Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani despite several international attempts at mediation.

### Pakistan

#### Security situation

On 10 September 2014 the air-force attacked five Taliban hide-outs in the border region to Afghanistan, reportedly killing 65 Taliban in the process. In the Bajaur region of the north-western tribal areas a policeman guarding a polio vaccination team was shot. The Taliban regularly attack vaccination teams. 58 health workers and policemen have been killed since December 2012.

#### Suspects arrested

The army informed that ten suspects were arrested in the case of the assault on the children rights activist Malala Yousafzai that left her critically wounded in October 2012.

#### Flood disaster

About 280 people lost their lives in Punjab province and in the Pakistani part of Kashmir following heavy flooding caused by extreme rainfall in the Himalayas. The region of Gilgit Baltistan was also affected by the flood. Many Pakistani villages are cut off and reportedly over two million people fled Punjab and Sindh.

## **Iraq**

### **New government sworn in**

On 08 September 2014 the new Iraqi government led by Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi was sworn in. The appointments for the ministries of the interior and for defence are still outstanding. Abadi requested a week of respite for the appointments and will be acting in these capacities until the appointments will have been made. As his deputies the prime minister appointed Hoshjar Zebari (Kurd), Salih al Mutlaq (secular Sunni), and Baha Arraji (Shiite). Adel Abdul Mahdi (Shiite) will assume the oil ministry. Ibrahim al-Jaafari (Shiite) will be take the post of foreign minister, Rowsh Shaways (Kurd) that of finance minister. 289 of 328 members had come together for the session.

### **Number of IS fighters**

The US secret service CIA stated that by now up to 31,500 Islamists are fighting for the terrorist militia Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria. Previously the US secret service had estimated at least 10,000 fighters.

## **Syria**

### **Rebel leader Ahrar al-Sham dies in an explosion**

The "Islamic Front", an alliance of several Islamist rebel organisations, including Ahrar al-Sham, announced that over 30 insurgents including their leader Hassan Abud were killed in a bomb attack of a meeting of 50 religious and military leaders of the rebel group Ahrar al-Shamin in Ram Hamdan (Idlib province in the north) on 09 September 2014. Ahrar al-Sham appointed Hashem al-Sheikh as its new leader and Abu Saleh Tahan as the new military head; the group's ideology is similar to that of the Islamic State, but they are enemies. It is still unclear who was responsible for the attack.

### **US intend to attack IS also in Syria**

On 10 September 2014 US President Obama announced that air-strikes will also target the IS militia in Syria in the future. He also plans to provide more support for the opposition. The US want to forge a broad coalition of foreign partners to dry up IS' funding and to stop the influx of fighters from Europe and the US to the crisis-ridden region. In the coming days Secretary of State John Kerry will visit the Middle East and Europe for this purpose. The Syrian government warned the US against undertaking any independent attacks, Russia opposes US air-strikes as well.

### **IS murders British aid worker**

The Islamic State beheaded the British aid worker Davis Haines who had been kidnapped near the refugee camp in Atmeh (Syria) in 2013.

## **Lebanon**

### **Refugee camp for Syrians**

Since the civil war in Syria began in March 2011 over one million refugees fled to Lebanon. Until now their reception had been make-shift. Now the construction of two refugee camps for 10,000 persons each is planned. This was announced by the Lebanese Social Affairs Minister Rashid Derbas on 11 September 2014. Many Lebanese oppose the construction of camps fearing that the Syrians will settle in Lebanon.

## **Israel / Palestinian Autonomous Areas**

### **Israeli elite soldiers refuse deployment to occupied territories**

In an open letter to Prime Minister Netanjahu 43 Israeli elite soldiers specializing in electronic surveillance, refused to do service in the occupied territories on the grounds that this would violate the rights of millions of people. They also criticized the expansion of Jewish settlements on the West Bank. It did not become clear whether they would refuse to obey specific orders in the future or quit service altogether. In either case they are risking long prison sentences.

## **Yemen**

### **Agreement with Houthi rebels reached**

After many weeks of protests the Yemeni government came to an agreement with the Shiite opposition, the Houthi rebels, that a new head of government will be appointed within 48 hours and the petrol price increase will be reversed. The 30,000 Houthi rebels want to close down their protest camp in Sanaa and withdraw their fighters from the city. Since early August the rebels had demanded the resignation of the Sunni dominated government of national unity, in which they were not represented. Already in early September President Abd Rabbo Mansur Hadi had announced a government reshuffle and offered to include Houthi rebels as well as representatives of a separatist movement from southern Yemen.

## **Turkey**

### **Internet act**

On 10 September 2014 the Turkish parliament adopted another amendment of the internet act permitting the state internet authority (TIB) to block websites without a court order in future in case of "risks to national security or public order". Internet providers must act on TIB's instruction to close down a website within four hours. Only thereafter the agency must seek a court order for the closure. Furthermore the new law provides for TIB to retain data for up to two years. Based on a court order TIB must surrender these data to the law enforcement authorities.

The government had tightened the internet act already in February 2014. Since the amendment internet providers must store user data for two years and release them to state authorities in individual cases on request. Access to the internet platforms Twitter and YouTube had been temporarily cut after corruption allegations against the government had been spread in spring. The constitutional court set aside the blocking.

## **Libya**

### **Parliament sits on car ferry**

According to a press report of 09 September 2014 the new parliament elected in August will be sitting on the Greek car ferry "Elyros" for an indefinite period for security reasons. For two weeks the new parliament has been engaged in a power struggle with the old parliament, in which Islamist elements hold the majority. Until now the new parliament had been sitting in Tobruk, in Libya's east.

## **Qatar/Egypt**

Qatar expelled seven leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including its Secretary General Mahmud Hussein. It seems that Qatar was responding to pressure from several Gulf States. It was announced in Cairo that the Muslim Brothers had left Qatar for the UK, because the UK has no extradition agreement with Egypt.

## **Central African Republic**

### **Official start of UN peace mission**

The UN peace mission MINUSCA (Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République centrafricaine) will officially start on 15 September 2014 on a preliminary mandate of

six months. MINUSCA will replace the MISCA mission (Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine) of the African Union. Most of its soldiers will remain in the country under UN command, reinforced by UN soldiers from Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Morocco. The UN plans to increase the current 7,600 MINUSCA forces to a total of about 12,000 soldiers and policemen.

## **Nigeria**

### **Fears of Boko Haram attack on Maiduguri**

An imminent attack on Maiduguri by the Islamist terror organization Boko Haram is expected because the group's strategy since the beginning of August 2014 had been to win territory and it conquered a number of towns to the north, south and east of Maiduguri (capital of Borno state in the north east with a population of one to two million, among them many refugees). In the early hours of the morning of 12 September 2014 Boko Haram fighters attacked the city of Konduga (about 35 km south east of Maiduguri). The army beat the attack back which reportedly claimed 100 casualties among the terrorists.

Already on 01 September 2014 Boko Haram had attacked Bama (about 70 km from Maiduguri, Borno state's second largest city). After heavy fighting with government troops it took control of the city on 02 September 2014. On the same day Boko Haram occupied the city of Banki in Borno state, on the border to Cameroon without meeting any resistance.

Refugees from the area conquered by Boko Haram reported that a great number of civilians had been killed by the terrorists.

### **Boko Haram occupied cities in Adamawa and Yobe**

Boko Haram fighters occupied the important commercial city of Michika (administrative seat of the Local Government Area -LGA- of the same name) in Adamawa state. An inhabitant who managed to flee reported that Boko Haram had killed about 100 people. The terrorists had conquered the city of Gulak (Madagali LGA) in Adamawa already on 04 September 2014. Without any fighting Boko Haram occupied the city of Bara (administrative seat of Gulani LHA) in Yobe state on 02 September 2014.

### **Heavy fighting in Borno and Adamawa**

At the moment the Nigerian armed forces are trying to reconquer the towns and villages under Boko Haram's control in Borno and Adamawa by deploying the air-force. The military announced that it had retaken Bama among other cities, but this was contradicted both by the Borno Elders' Forum and the "Bama Shehu" (the traditional head of the city) according to press reports of 11 September 2014.

### **WHO fears spreading of Ebola in Port Harcourt**

The Nigerian Ministry of Health informed on 10 September 2014 that 19 cases of Ebola had been confirmed in Nigeria, 15 of these in the commercial hub of Lagos and four in the port city and oil centre Port Harcourt in the south-east. There have been seven casualties so far, five in Lagos and two in Port Harcourt. In Lagos only 16 of originally 350 people are still under observation, however, in Port Harcourt 500 are in quarantine. According to information from the World Health Organisation (WHO) the Ebola outbreak in Port Harcourt of 03 September 2014 has more of a potential to spread fast than the Ebola infections in Lagos. The virus had been introduced to Lagos by a man entering at the airport coming from Liberia, he probably also infected a doctor.

## **Democratic Republic of Congo**

The World Health Organisation announced on 10 September 2014 that 31 cases of Ebola had been registered between 02 and 09 September 2014. This almost doubles the number of infections within one week to 62. Of these 14 are confirmed, 26 are probable and 22 suspected. In total 35 people have died of the disease until now. All cases occurred in the Jera sector in Boende territory (Tshuapa district, Equateur province), mostly the villages of Watsi Kengo, Lokolia, Boende, and Boende Muke. Boende is about 400 km linear distance east of the provincial capital Mbandaka and 1,200km from Kinshasa.

## **West Africa**

### **About 2,300 Ebola casualties**

WHO informed on 09 September 2014 that the number of Ebola casualties has increased to about 2,300. Over half of the cases were registered in Liberia (over 1,200 deaths of 2,000 infections). The virus has already spread to 14 of the 15 regions of Liberia. About 550 deaths reported from Guinea, about 500 from Sierra Leone. At least eight people had died of the disease in Nigeria, WHO said. The number of infections in the Democratic Republic of Congo rose to 62, the number of registered fatalities is 35. Since March over 4,300 cases of Ebola had been registered, including three in Senegal. WHO expects the virus to continue to spread widely.

## **Cameroon**

### **Soldiers kill more than 100 Boko Haram fighters**

A Cameroonian government spokesman said on 08 September 2014 that Boko Haram fired two shells on the city of Fotokol (Extrême Nord region) bordering with Nigeria on 06 September 2014. Cameroon's military responded by firing mortars. On that day over 100 Boko Haram fighters were killed, including two Tuareg. Boko Haram had to retreat about seven kilometres in the direction of the Nigerian border town Gamboru Ngala, of which it had taken control at the end of August 2014. The Defence Ministry of Cameroon had announced already on 02 September 2014 that soldiers had killed over 40 Boko Haram fighters when they attempted to cross the Nigerian/Cameroonian border by passing over the bridge near Fotokol.

## **Uganda**

The security forces reported that they had prevented a major attack and seized explosives on 13 September 2014. Several suspects had been arrested, who reportedly belong to an Islamist terror group.

Prior thereto the US embassy had warned all US citizens staying in Uganda not to leave their homes or to move to a safe place. On 13 September 2014 the embassy posted information on its website that members of the Somali al-Shabaab militia were planning an attack, but its target was not known. The US had already previously warned of revenge by the Al Qaeda ally al-Shabaab after militia boss Ahmed Abdi Godane was recently killed in a US air strike.

Eyewitnesses reported that heavily armed police was patrolling the capital's streets on 14 September 2014. The police stated that further operations against the Islamists were under-way.

## **Somalia**

### **Attacks near Mogadishu**

In two suicide bombings of an AMISOM convoy and a convoy of Somali security forces within one hour at least twelve civilians in a van died south-west of Mogadishu on 08 September 2014. Twelve people, including two soldiers, are reported wounded. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attacks, as it had announced acts of revenge after its leader Godane was killed in a US air-strike that was supported by France (see Briefing Notes of 08 September 2014).

### **Accusations of abuse against AMISOM soldiers**

A report published on 08 September 2014 by the human rights organization Human Rights Watch (HRW) documents cases of sexual abuse of Somali women and girls by AMISOM soldiers at two bases in Mogadishu since 2013. Allegedly the soldiers raped or otherwise sexually abused women asking for medical care or water, including with the help of Somali interpreters. The report is based on the testimony of 21 women and girls stating that they were sexually abused by soldiers from Burundi or Uganda. HRW demanded the African Union to see to it that the countries providing AMISOM troops will bring the offenders to account.

The African Union took issue with the report saying that it was not representative and denigrated the peace forces' work. Also the number of cases was too small to permit generalizations, the African Union would, however, investigate the allegations. Somali authorities made an announcement to the same effect.

## **Kenya**

### **German nationals arrested as terrorism suspects**

As became known last week Kenyan police arrested two German nationals because of suspected membership in the Islamist militia al-Shabaab already on 29 August 2014. Based on information from Kenyan authorities another three Germans were arrested at Frankfurt airport on 06 August 2014. The Federal Attorney General informed that they are also suspected of membership in al-Shabaab and of having prepared a major violent attack threatening national security. There was, however, no evidence of specific plans or preparations for attacks. A media report of 14 September 2014 said that the three suspects arrested in Frankfurt were members of an extremist Bonn group called „Deutsche Schabab" (German Shabaab). A dozen of the group's members had travelled to East Africa in 2012/2013.

## **Ukraine**

### **Military and separatists exchange prisoners**

The ceasefire agreed on 05 September 2014 in the conflict-ridden region of Eastern Ukraine also provided for an exchange of prisoners. It was repeatedly delayed for lack of specific arrangements. After tough negotiations the military and the pro-Russian separatists finally exchanged 73 prisoners each on 14 September 2014. Russian news agencies citing the separatists reported on 14 September 2014 that the exchange had taken place about 60 km south of the major city of Donetsk. Several hundred men are thought to be still held prisoner.

Even though the ceasefire remains shaky the fighting has decreased considerably. On 14 September 2014 the Ukrainian government blamed the pro-Russian forces for violating the truce and thus jeopardizing the peace process.

## **Russian Federation**

### **Kremlin party strengthens leadership in regional elections**

According to the Election Committee the party ruling in the Kremlin, "United Russia", has strengthened its leadership almost everywhere in the regional elections that had been accompanied by accusations of fraud. Elections were also held on the Crimean peninsula in the Black Sea which Russia had annexed despite international protests in March 2014. The election management said that over 70% of the Crimean voters elected the Kremlin party. The western countries do not recognize this election.

On 14 September 2014 75 million voters were called upon to elect 30 regional governors, 14 regional parliaments, three mayors and thousands of city councils in the largest regional elections since 1991. The city parliament was elected in the capital Moscow and in the country's second largest city and home-town of President Vladimir Putin, Saint Petersburg, the governor. For the Kremlin party United Russia the local and governor elections were an important gauge for the approval of Putin's policies in times of crisis.

In Moscow four parties loyal to the Kremlin managed to enter the city parliament, where hitherto only United Russia and the Communist Party had been represented. This time one seat each went to the ultra-nationalist liberal democrats of Vladimir Shirinovski and the Rodina party (homeland). Again the moderate opposition party Jabloko failed by a narrow margin and complained about massive irregularities during the vote.

The independent organisation Golos listed all violations of the election law nationwide. It said that the authorities had permitted many voters to cast several votes. Other observers complained that in some polling stations several filled ballot boxes had been prepared already prior to the opening. The central election management in Moscow called this "insignificant incidents". Opponents of the Kremlin called the voting a 'farce'. According to the election management the voter turnout in Crimea was about 45%, in the evening of 14 September 2014 about 18 % in Moscow.

## **India**

### **Court ends discrimination in Hindu funeral rites**

The highest court of the north Indian state of Rajasthan ruled that public crematoria may no longer cremate the bodies by caste. The Jaipur court instructed the authorities to stop discriminating between bodies of different population groups. The constitution prohibits discriminating against anybody for reasons of "religion, race, caste, gender or place of birth". Right now there are separate crematoria for each caste and it is prohibited to burn deceased belonging to a certain caste in certain crematoria.

## **China**

### **Kunming assassins sentenced**

On 12 September 2014 a Kunming court (Yunnan province) sentenced three defendants charged with the Kunming attacks to death. They were accused of having planned the attack in which about 30 people were indiscriminately killed with knives and axes at Kunming station (see BN of 03 March 2014). A female defendant was given a life sentence for aiding and abetting the attack.