

## Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

24 June 2013

### **Afghanistan**

#### **Initiation of peace talks uncertain**

On 18 June 2013 the Taliban opened a liaison office in the Qatari capital of Doha and indicated that they were prepared to renew the peace process. President Karzai first announced that he was about to send a delegation of the High Peace Council to Doha. Almost simultaneously the US let it be known that they were planning to take up talks with the Taliban in Doha in a matter of days. On 19 June 2013 then, Karzai rejected negotiations, saying that any negotiations had to be led by Afghans and without any external interference; he excluded any participation in talks between the Taliban and the US. Thus it is completely open at this time whether any talks will take place or not. The Afghan government also suspended negotiations with the US for a security agreement to define the cooperation with the US after the withdrawal of NATO troops in 2014.

#### **Transfer of responsibility for security/Security situation**

On 18 June 2013 President Kabul announced in Kabul that Afghan security and law enforcement agencies have assumed responsibility for security in the entire national territory. This transfer of responsibility is to prepare the ground for the progressive withdrawal of the international forces from Afghanistan's different provinces in the coming months to be completed by 2014. From now on the roughly 100,000 NATO soldiers stationed in the country will merely play a supporting role. During the transfer ceremony three people were killed and over 20 injured in the assault of a convoy in Kabul which was presumably aimed at the Afghan member of parliament Mohammed Mohaqiq. Mohaqiq escaped unharmed.

Four US soldiers were killed in an attack on Bagram air base on 18 June 2013. On 22 June 2013 the Taliban attacked a police post in the northern Afghanistan province of Kunduz, at least 18 insurgents and two policemen died during the assault. Eleven insurgents and one policeman are reported wounded. One ISAF soldier was killed in another attack in southern Afghanistan.

### **Iraq**

#### **Security situation**

In two coordinated assaults on a Shiite mosque in Baghdad at least 29 people died on 18 June 2013.

A total of 13 people died in attacks in Al-Hadhr (Ninive province) and in Diyala province on 19 June 2013.

In a series of attacks that mostly affected Baghdad, Mosul (Ninive province) and the provinces of Salahaddin and Anbar at least 30 people died on 22 June 2013.

43 people were killed in several attacks that occurred on 23 June 2013 including in Baghdad and the provinces Ninive, Salahaddin, Anbar, and Kirkuk.

#### **Attacks during by-elections**

The delayed elections to the provincial councils were held under tight security in the provinces of Anbar and Ninive on 20 June 2013. Extremists attacked polling stations. Two policemen were killed in Ramadi (Anbar province). On the eve of the election a party leader and four members of his family were killed by a suicide bomber in Ninive province.

In the evening of 20 June 2013 an attack on a polling station claimed eight lives in Ramadi. Reportedly the victims were members of the election committee and policemen.

## **Pakistan**

### **Mountaineers murdered**

In the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Cashmere Islamist extremists murdered ten foreign mountaineers and a Pakistani cook in a base camp at Nanga Parbat on 22 June 2013. The Pakistani media reported that the foreigners were two Chinese, a US-American of Chinese descent, three Ukrainians, two Slovaks, a Lithuanian and a Nepalese. Another Chinese mountaineer managed to escape. The report says that about 15 extremists in the uniform of the Gilgit Scouts attacked the sleeping men around midnight. A spokesman of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan informed that the group of Janud-e-Hafsa, that is related to the Pakistani Taliban, had executed the attack in retaliation for the killing of the Taliban commander Wali ur Rehman by a US drone in May.

### **Suicide bombing of Shiite mosque**

On 21 June 2013 at least 14 people died in Peshawar when a suicide bomber first started to shoot at policemen guarding a Shiite mosque and then blew himself up amidst the crowd of the faithful.

### **Politician is assassinated in Karachi**

In Karachi (southern province of Sindh) unknown gunmen shot a member of the provincial parliament, his son and a passer-by on 21 June 2013. They opened fire at the politician of the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) as he was leaving a mosque after Friday prayers.

The MQM is the second strongest party in the provincial parliament. Most of its followers are Urdu-speaking Muslims who (or whose families) migrated from India to Pakistan when the two independent states of India and Pakistan were formed in 1947.

## **Syria**

### **The Foreign Ministers of the Syria Contact Group step up assistance to the rebels**

On 22 June 2013 the Foreign Ministers of eleven Western and Arab countries (USA, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Qatar) of the "Friends of Syria" decided in Qatar that the insurgents "should urgently be supplied with all required material and equipment". They said that it was up to each country to decide in which form it wants to support the insurgents. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey plan to supply arms. The support is to be coordinated by the pro-Western Supreme Military Council. The German Foreign Minister wants to prepare the planned Syria conference in Geneva together with other foreign ministers, however, neither the date nor the participants of the conference are known.

### **US are training 5,000 rebels in Jordan**

On 22 June 2013 Jordanian military announced that the US had already started to train 5,000 rebels of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). The training programme, initiated already last year and limited to the discovery and defusing of chemical weapons, had now been extended to include the operation of anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, the announcement said.

### **Fighting in Syria continues**

Meanwhile the fighting continues. On 22 June 2013 both the government troops and the rebels reinforced their offensives at points of strategic importance: the government troops did so mainly in the north of the capital Damascus to cut the rebels' supply routes; while the rebels attempted to advance to the western parts of the city of Aleppo.

## **West Bank**

### **Prime Minister Hamdallah resigns**

Less than three weeks after his appointment Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah submitted his resignation. This was confirmed by his office on 20 June 2013. The reason given were the "restriction of his authority". At the beginning of June Abbas had appointed Hamdallah as head of government to lead the interim government until August. Al-Fatah and the radical Islamist Hamas plan to have formed an independent government headed by Abbas by then. There were, however, major doubts whether this agreement would indeed be implemented in view of the enormous differences between the two largest Palestinian organisations. The appointment of Hamdallah, who is considered a moderate, had first raised hopes for new political impulses in the region and the initiation of peace talks with Israel on a two state solution. On 06 June 2013 the 54-year-old university professor had presented his government, many of whose 24 members had already belonged to the cabinet of Hamdallah's predecessor Salam Fayyad, who had resigned in mid-April after falling out with Abbas.

## **Turkey**

### **Consultation on accession negotiations**

Today the EU initiates talks with Turkey on the continuation of the accession negotiations at the level of the EU ambassadors. The talks shall lead to a decision on starting negotiations on the next accession chapter. In an interview with Süddeutsche Zeitung the Turkish Minister for Europe, Bagis, announced that his country would respond if Germany would block the continuation of the accession negotiations. He said: „Just let me say that Turkey also has other options.“ At the same time he, however, toned down his criticism of Chancellor Merkel by stressing: "We need the EU and the EU needs us." Early last week the Federal Chancellor had voiced criticism of the Turkish authorities' harsh handling of the demonstrators. Actually the accession conference had been designed to bring about a break-through after more than two years of standstill in the accession talks. The opening of another negotiation chapter on regional policy had been planned. 13 of a total 35 chapters have been opened during the eight years of negotiations and one has been preliminarily completed.

### **Renewed protests**

On 22 June 2013 the police again used water cannons and tear gas against demonstrators on Istanbul's Taksim Squar. They also used protective shields to push the demonstrators back. Last week only a few silent protests were held at Taksim Square. Then on Saturday several thousand people were protesting peacefully, but were very vocal. Prime Minister Erdogan accused the demonstrators of lacking respect for Islam. Further protests against his political style were held in the capital Ankara.

## **Libya**

### **Jurisdiction is planning to put Gaddafi's son on trial**

The press reported on 17 June 2013 that the son of the dead Libyan potentate Muammar al-Gaddafi, Saif al-Islam, is to stand trial as of August on charges of "crimes against the Libyan people during the 2011 revolution". Also other members of the former powerful elite are to stand trial, including the former head of the secret service Abdullah al-Senussi, former Prime Minister Bagdadi al-Mahmudi, and the former head of the Libyan security brigades, Mansur Daw.

## **Egypt**

### **Newly appointed governor of Luxor resigns**

Following national and international protests against him, Adel Asaad al-Chajat, resigned his post as governor of Luxor province after having been appointed by President Mursi only one week earlier. Al-Chajat is a member of the formerly extremist group Gamaa al-Islamiya which was responsible for the massacre at the

temple of Hatshepsut in Luxor in 1997 in which 58 foreign tourists died. Gamaa al-Islamiya later disavowed the use of violence.

### **Army threatens interference**

As nationwide protests against President Mursi are expected on the anniversary of his assumption of the presidency on 30 June 2013, the Supreme Commander of the Army and Minister of Defence Abdel-Fatah el-Sissi warned on 23 June 2013 that the army would interfere with any conflict between anti-government protesters and Islamists. According to his words no attack against the will of the people would be tolerated. Observers interpret this to mean that the army would interfere on the side of the President's opponents.

### **Sunni mob kills four Shiites**

In a village near Gizeh in the vicinity of Cairo Sunni villagers beat four Shiites to death on 23 June 2013. Dozens of members of this religious minority were wounded. Reportedly Salafists who had been preaching for weeks incited about 3,000 people to attack the houses of Shiites.

## **Russian Federation**

### **Human rights organisation „For Human Rights“ evicted from its Moscow office**

Around 2am on 22 June 2013 a large group of men entered the Moscow office of the prestigious human rights organisation „For Human Rights“ and cleared everything out. Several persons present in the office, including the organisation's chairman, Lev Ponomarev, suffered minor injuries. Already on the day before several dozen policemen had entered the office and unsuccessfully instructed all employees to leave. The police said that according to the Moscow authorities the reason for the eviction of the office from a municipal building by members of a private security firm was the termination of the rental agreement. Ponomarev rejected these allegations and said that the eviction was yet another form of harassment against anybody engaging in criticism. The presidential Russian human rights commissioner Fedotov called the brutal eviction illegal. Although there had been problems with the extension of the rental agreement, he said, the organisation had been entitled to remain on the premises until the matter had been decided by the courts.

## **Albania**

### **Parliamentary elections - no official results yet**

The official results of the parliamentary elections are still outstanding. Thus it is not yet known whether the incumbent Sali Berisha, who has been in office since 2005, can continue to govern with his rightist Conservative Democrats or whether his challenger Edi Rama of the United Left won the elections. Both of the contestants are claiming victory. Unofficial polls are contradictory, some see the Socialists as winners, some the Democrats.

### **Voting overshadowed by accusations of manipulations and acts of violence**

The European Union called the elections Albania's test of democracy on the way to Europe. The country had unsuccessfully applied for the status of EU accession candidate already twice. Since the ousting of the Communist regime in 1990 all elections held in the country were marred by conflicts. Also the vote in 2009 led to a political crisis. This time again, independent election observers reported massive irregularities and manipulations of the vote: voters had been allowed to cast their vote without showing their ID cards, some polling stations opened several hours late, individual voters cast the votes for entire families. Furthermore the voting was accompanied by acts of violence: in the city of Lac, about 35 km north of the capital Tirana a supporter of the Socialist Party was shot, in the port city of Vlorë the car of the local secretary of the Socialist Party was blown up, in many places brawls broke out in front of the polling stations. Still, the Albanian media called it a relatively quiet election.

## **Mali**

### **Peace agreement signed with Tuareg in Mali**

The Malian government signed a peace agreement with the armed groups that are still active in the north of the country. After eleven days of negotiations the agreement was signed in Burkina Faso's capital on 18 June 2013. It shall firstly, make it possible to hold the first round of the presidential elections scheduled for 28 July 2013 throughout the entire national territory. Further, the agreement provides for an immediate ceasefire and the deployment of a West African intervention force together with units of the national army in the city of Kidal that still is under the control of the Tuareg rebels. Joint bodies shall prepare the disarmament of the armed groups. As a first step the hitherto active rebel groups shall assemble in bases. Joint patrols, reinforced by UN personnel shall monitor the observation of the terms of the agreement. State bodies and social services may return to northern Mali. All of the measures are to be implemented before elections.

## **Nigeria**

### **Boko Haram kills students, teachers and fishermen in retaliation**

On 17 June 2013 around 3pm members of the Islamist Boko Haram stormed „Ansarudeen Private School“ in Jajeri, a suburb of Maiduguri (capital of the north Eastern state of Borno). They shot nine students and seriously wounded several others. On the same day Boko Haram members attacked fishermen on Alau river in the outskirts of Maiduguri. They ordered the fishermen who came from the boroughs of Gwange and Hausari to stand together. The 13 persons standing in this group were shot after having been told that their children were responsible for the fishermen's fate, an eyewitness reported. Because the children would pick up Boko Haram members and hand them over to the soldiers who then killed them. Only one day earlier at around 9pm Boko Haram members had attacked the dormitories of the „Government Secondary School Damaturu“ in Damaturu (capital of the neighbouring state of Yobe) and a nearby military road check point and assassinated seven students and two teachers. Two of the attackers were killed, three were arrested.

Obviously these murders of students and fishermen were made in retaliation for the formation of vigilante groups by over 500 young people in Maiduguri - mostly from the boroughs of Gwange I and II, Blabirin, Mafoni, and Hausari, but also by some youths from Yobe state. These groups identify Boko Haram members, seize them and hand them over to the security forces. In an email to journalists Boko Haram spokesman Abu Zinnira stated on 18 June 2013 that now the young people in Borno and Yobe states would also be targets of attacks, because they actively supported the security forces in their fight against Boko Haram. President Jonathan called the young people "new national heroes".

### **Villagers massacred in Zamfara state**

On 18 June 2013 around 4am about 150 armed men attacked the remote village of Kizara (Tsafe Local Government) in the north western state of Zamfara. After shooting at the village from a hill they went from house to house, killed the residents with gunshots and machetes and set fire to several houses. According to official sources 48 people died. Allegedly the assassins told the villagers that they were looking for the members of a local vigilante group that had "disturbed" them. It is assumed that the attack was an act of retaliation by cattle thieves against the local vigilante group. There had been several similar assaults on villages in Zamfara in the last two years in which many people died, the death toll had, however, never been as high as in Kizara.

## **Somalia**

### **15 die in assault on UN building**

In an attack by al-Shabaab on a United Nations branch in Mogadishu at least 15 people died on 10 June 2013. After a suicide bomber exploded a bomb in the building's entry area other terrorists stormed the building. Ministers of Interior Abdikarim Husien Gulled informed that the victims included four foreign staff of the UN Development Program (UNDP) and four Somali security staff. At least ten civilians had been wounded.

## **Togo**

### **Persons arrested for arson released**

Ten of the suspects arrested in relation to the large fires on the markets in Lome and Kara have been preliminarily released on 18 June 2013. A total of 35 persons had been charged with arson and at least 23 of them have been arrested. One of them died in prison on 10 May 2013. Most of the defendants are members of the opposition who suspect political motives behind the authorities' actions.

### **Parliamentary elections**

Parliamentary elections will be held on 21 July 2013. On 20 June 2013 it became known that the opposition will participate in the elections after demonstrating for election reforms several times in recent weeks. At the beginning of June it had still declined to participate, because in its view the conditions for a fair vote were not met.

## **Uganda**

### **Fatalities during rally, opposition leader arrested**

On 20 June 2013 police used force against a gathering that was held at Kisekka market in Kampala to listen to the speech of the former president of the major opposition party FDC (Forum for Democratic Change), Kizza Besigye. At least one person was killed and at least eleven were injured. Besigye was arrested.

## **Vietnam**

### **Blogger arrested**

On 17 June 2013 the Vietnamese paper Than Nien reported that on 15 June 2013 the blogger Dinh Nhat Uy had been arrested in the southern province of An for "abuse of democratic freedoms" by disseminating "defamatory and false information". His brother, the university student Dinh Nguyen Kha, had received an eight year prison sentence already in May for "propaganda against the State" by protesting against the growing influence of China in flyers.

Earlier, on 13 June 2013, the blogger and former cultural official Pham Viet Dao had been arrested in the capital Hanoi for criticising the government.

According to Human Rights Watch 46 bloggers and activists have been arrested in 2013 already, which are more than during the entire year of 2012, indicating that the government is taking a more hard-liner approach.