

## Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

3 February 2014

### **Afghanistan**

#### **Security situation**

On 1 February 2014 unidentified gunmen shot two team members of the presidential candidate and former Foreign Minister Mr Abdullah Abdullah in the town of Herat in western Afghanistan dead.

#### **Election campaign begins**

Today, on 3 February 2014 is the official start of the election campaign for Afghanistan's next president to follow President Karzai. Human rights activists say that the eleven candidates include at least nine candidates who were former militia leaders and have thus been accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

#### **Number of voluntary returnees from Pakistan and Iran has decreased**

Last year 31,000 registered Afghan refugees returned from Pakistan to Afghanistan with the help of the UN, as the UNHCR said. The year before the number was as high as 86,000. In 2013 the number of returnees from Iran was 8,000. The reasons for the reservation of returnees are reportedly unsecure prospects for their future in Afghanistan (imminent presidential elections, withdrawal of foreign armed forces to their home countries) as well as the fact that since the beginning of the return programme in 2001 most of those who wanted to return, have already done so. The number of Afghan refugees who are still staying in Pakistan is estimated to approximately 1.6 million people. From next month on the registered refugees will be given new "Proof of Registration" (PoR) cards (which prove their legal residence in the country) valid by the end of 2015. Around 800,000 registered Afghan refugees live according to the UN in Iran. The human rights organisation Human Rights Watch assumes that another 1.4 to 2 million Afghans live illegally there. They are subject to a number of discriminations and constantly face deportation.

### **Iraq**

#### **General security situation**

Last week there were attacks every day as in the weeks before. According to Iraq Body Count the number of fatalities among civilians in January 2014 is at 1,076 people.

UNAMI (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq) said that in January 2014 a total of 733 Iraqis were killed, among them 618 civilians and 115 members of the Iraqi security forces. Another 1,229 people were wounded, among them 1,052 civilians and 177 members of the Iraqi security forces. UNAMI pointed out that the number of casualties in January does not include the number of casualties resulting from the continued fighting in Anbar province as there are difficulties in determining the exact numbers of people killed and wounded.

Baghdad was the province which was worst affected by the violence with 882 civilian victims (297 fatalities, 585 wounded), followed by Salahaddin (105 fatalities and 169 wounded), Diyala (89 fatalities, 90 wounded), Ninive (81 fatalities, 82 wounded) and Kirkuk (21 fatalities, 101 wounded).

According to a count made by the news agency AFP which is not broken up by province, the total number of fatalities in January 2014 is at 991. This number includes 57 policemen, 67 soldiers, 20 members of the Sahwa, 2 members of the Kurdish security forces and 389 militants.

According to a press release of the Catholic news agency dated 2 February 2014 the number of victims is higher, as the Arab newspaper "Arab News" said which based their numbers on information of the Iraqi Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Defence. According to these numbers 1,013 people died in January, 795 of them were civilians. Another 2,024 were wounded, among them 1,633 civilians.

### **Situation in Anbar province**

The UNAMI which bases its numbers on information of the health authorities says that the total number of civilian victims in Anbar by 27 January 2014 is at 138 people killed and 598 wounded. In this number are 79 people who were killed in Ramadi and 287 wounded there. In Falluja were 59 people killed and 311 wounded. Media reports of 31 January 2014 which rely on information of the health authorities in Anbar province said that the number of civilians killed in January was at 140, the number of wounded was 550 in the mainly Sunni populated Anbar province.

A press release of 2 February 2014 said that the Iraqi armed forces had increased their operations against Islamist fighters in the towns of Ramadi and Falluja on 1 February 2014. An attack onto the town of Ramadi which in part is controlled by Islamist rebels killed 35 rebels. Attacks of the Iraqi air force in the town of Falluja which according to press releases is completely controlled by ISIL/ISIS fighters killed 15 rebels. Press releases say that in fighting in Anbar province the Iraqi armed forces and the police stand on one side and the terror organisation The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS) and their allies stand on the other side. Anbar province is a border province to Syria.

## **Pakistan**

### **Security situation**

A bomb attack onto a cinema in the town of Peshawar in north-west Pakistan on 2 February 2014 killed at least four people and wounded another 31.

### **Tribal court ordered mass rape of a widow**

An illegal tribal court in Punjab province in eastern Pakistan ordered last week a mass rape of a widow aged 45 years. In ordering this, the tribal court wanted to sentence an extra-marital relationship of the woman's brother and to solve a family conflict. The Pakistani authorities arrested six suspects on 31 January 2014.

## **Syria**

### **Syrian peace talks in Geneva end without result**

The talks between the parties to the conflict lasting several days in the framework of the Syrian peace talks ended on 31 January 2014 without any result; neither could a political alignment be reached nor the prospect of an ending of the bloodshed in Syria. The agreement made in Geneva that the civilians in the city of Homs which is besieged by the armed forces should be allowed to leave, had not been implemented by 31 January 2014. The union of states called the "Friends of the Syrian People" said that they were "disgusted" by the fact that the Syrian government continues to maintain its strategy of "starve or give up". UN mediator Mr Lakhdar Brahimi hopes that the talks will be taken up again on 10 February 2014.

### **Civil war in Syria continues**

The organisation Syrian Observatory for Human Rights in London announced on 31 January 2014 that since the beginning of the Syrian peace talks on 22 January 2014 approximately 1,900 people have died in Syria, among them 498 civilians. 72 people reportedly starved in the areas which are cut off from the outside world owing to the siege of the Syrian armed forces.

Air raids onto the town of Aleppo in the north of Syria on 1 February 2014 reportedly killed at least 85 people; 65 civilians, among them 13 children. Since 2012 this economic centre has been the setting of heavy clashes, at present the Syrian armed forces control the west of the town, whereas the rebels occupy the eastern part of the town. So far, the Syrian civil war has killed at least 136,000 people, among them 48,000 civilians; and the estimated number of unreported cases is presumably higher.

### **Refugee crisis in Syria and outside of Syria**

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Mr Antonio Guterres said on 31 January 2014 on the Munich Security Conference that the civil war in Syria has triggered off the most serious refugee crisis since the tribal genocide in Ruanda twenty years ago. At least 2.4 million Syrians have left their country and 6.5 million people are reportedly internally displaced persons. 240,000 people live in areas which cannot be reached by the international help convoys.

## **Lebanon**

### **Bomb attack of the Jabhat al-Nusra in the north of Lebanon**

The Jabhat al-Nusra (also called al-Nusra Front) which is linked to al-Qaida has taken responsibility for a bomb attack on 1 February 2014 in Lebanon's north, which killed four and wounded more than twenty, some of them seriously. The blast occurred in the town of Hermel, a stronghold of the Shiite Hezbollah where approximately a fortnight ago a suicide attack killed 5 people. The increasing violence in Lebanon appears to be linked to the civil war in Syria.

## **Yemen**

### **German kidnapped in Yemen**

On 31 January 2014 an approximately 60 year old German was kidnapped in the Yemenite city of Sanaa and taken into a tribal region east of Sanaa. The kidnapper requested the release of his two sons who are in prison. In Yemen foreigners have always again been kidnapped, in most cases by tribal groups which request concessions by the central government and which then release their victims unwounded. A body guard of the German Ambassador to Yemen was killed in October 2013 when he defended himself against the attempt to be kidnapped.

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **Controversial anti terror law in force**

On 2 February 2014 King Abdullah enforced a new anti terror law which the Saudi cabinet had adopted in December 2013. The controversial law includes far reaching and airy provisions and it allows the security forces to search apartments and offices without judicial order. Human rights activists fear that criticising the monarchy and its politics may thus be criminalised.

## **Egypt**

### **Journalists on trial**

Egyptian prosecutors put 20 journalists from the al-Jazeera television network on trial (16 Egyptians, two Britons, one Australian and one Dutchman) owing to the fact that they have been editorially sympathetic in connection with the demonstrations of supporters of former President Morsi and the clearing of protesters' camps in August 2013. They said that the journalists had been charged with belonging to a terrorist organisation and harming national unity and social peace. Al-Jazeera is financed by Qatar. The state of Qatar had vigorously condemned the fall of Mr Morsi.

### **Dissolution of Muslim Brotherhood confirmed**

A court of appeal in Cairo confirmed on 1 February 2014 a first instance judgment of September 2013 which had ordered the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood. Along with the court of appeal's judgment the close-down of about 1,000 charitable foundations of the Muslim Brotherhood will become effective as well as the collection of their assets.

## **Libya**

### **Attack onto Minister of the Interior**

The Libyan Minister of the Interior Mr Seddik Abdelkarim escaped an attempted murder on 29 January 2014 in the capital of Tripoli. Unidentified attackers shot onto his car when he was on his way to parliament. However, nobody in the car was wounded.

## **Nigeria**

### **Many fatalities due to attacks in villages**

On 26 January 2014 gunmen in uniforms of the armed forces attacked the worshippers in a Catholic church in the village of Wada Chakawa (federal state of Adamawa in the north-east, Madagali Local Government Area) during Sunday morning service with machine guns and explosive devices. Then, they set fire on houses and took villagers as hostages. The attack had lasted for about 4 hours and reportedly at least 53 people were killed.

The same day approximately 50 gunmen attacked at about 5 pm the Sunday market in the village of Kawuri (federal state of Borno in the north-east, Konduga Local Government Area). They shot people down at random and fired explosive devices. Before they fled they burnt down about 300 houses in the village. At least 83 people were killed.

Both attacks have allegedly been carried out by members of the militant Islamist organisation Boko Haram.

### **Well-known Salafist leader shot dead**

On 1 February 2014 unidentified attackers launched an attack around 10 pm onto the well-known Islamic cleric and leader of the Salafist Movement in Nigeria, Mr Sheikh Mohamed Awwal Adam Albani who is also known as "Albani of Zaria". When he drove home after a lecture in the town of Zaria (federal state of Kaduna in the north) they stopped his car in Shehu Idris Street and shot onto the people in the car. His wife and his 18 year old son were killed, Mr Albani died on the way to hospital. Three of his children and one student who were all sitting in the car suffered from gunshot wounds. Mr Albani was a well-known critic of the Boko Haram. In the past he had requested from their members to stop killing people as this is in contrast to Islam.

### **Priest killed**

In the night of 31 January 2014 gunmen attacked the village of Sabon Gari Yamdula (Madagali Local Government Area, federal state of Adamawa in the north-east). They killed ten villagers as well as the minister of the protestant EYN church ("Church of the Brethren"). The attackers are presumably members of the Boko Haram.

## **Somalia**

### **Drone missile strike against Al Shabaab leader**

US and Somali security sources said that a drone launched the missile on 26 January 2014 near the town of Barawe in the region of Lower Shabelle against the Al Shabaab leader Mr Sheikh Mukhtar Abu Zubair alias Ahmed Abdi Godane. Mr Godane appears to have survived. It is unclear whether he was wounded or not. A high-ranking commander of the Al Shabaab, Mr Ahmed Abdulkadir "Sahal Iskudhuq" who was regarded as Mr Godane's intimate friend, was reportedly killed in the attack. After the attack Al Shabaab reportedly arrested several persons in Barawe under the reproach of espionage.

## **Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)**

### **Attack onto NGO for homosexuals in Abidjan**

After several days of homophobic protests in Côte d'Ivoire, a mob of about 200 people attacked the offices of the homosexuals' organisation "Alternative Côte d'Ivoire" in Abidjan on 25 January 2014. The office furniture was destroyed and things were taken away. One security guard was wounded in this attack. The police were accused of having appeared at the site of crime only more than two hours later.

Côte d'Ivoire has so far just rarely been subject to the reporting of homophobic attacks. The country is considered to be liberal and is therefore often called a "Harbour for African homosexuals". According to Amnesty International is Côte d'Ivoire among the few states where homosexuals have never been subject to legal prosecution. However, activists say that the living conditions for lesbians and gays are worsening here as well and that the number of attacks is increasing. The reason for this is a reportedly general homophobic atmosphere in Africa.

## **Turkey**

### **Corruption affair**

According to Turkish media reports more than 800 additional policemen had to accept new jobs in the framework of the corruption affair on 30 January 2014, among them more than 500 in Ankara. The Turkish government had already relocated hundreds of policemen and prosecutors. The last incident was on 29 January 2014 when among others the Istanbul prosecutor was relocated who had ordered the search operations and arrests in connection with the corruption investigations.

## **Ukraine**

### **Protests in Ukraine continue**

As they had received new strength through solidarity statements of politicians from the west last week, ten thousands of people have again protested in Ukraine against the government of President Viktor Yanukovich. On 2 February 2014 more than 50,000 protesters gathered on the independence square in Kiev which is surrounded by barriers. The protesters received the opposition leaders Mr Vitali Klitschko and Mr Arsenij Yatseniuk with jubilation. The USA and the EU had assured the opposition of their financial support on the Munich Security Conference on the weekend. In a speech in front of government opponents Mr Klitschko rejected the amnesty law which parliament had adopted. Mr Klitschko said that the law cannot be accepted because the release of prisoners is made dependent on the clearing of occupied government buildings. Thus, government opponents would be made "hostages". The former Minister of the Interior Mr Yuri Lutsenko, member of the Fatherland Alliance party of the former Head of government Ms Julia Tymoshenko who is in prison, spoke in front of the protesters of a "new colonisation attempt" of Ukraine made by Russia. He called on the protesters to form "self defence units" across the country. These are reportedly the best way to prevent a possible bloodshed.

After having been in hospital for several days President Yanukovich shall reportedly come back to work on 3 February 2014. On 30 January 2014 the President's office informed that Mr Yanukovich needed medical treatment due to fever and an illness of the respiratory system. Violent clashes between the security forces and protesters have so far killed five people, as activists say. Several government opponents were displaced and heavily beaten. Reproaches of torture have also been made in the past few days.

## **Serbia**

### **Early elections in March**

Two years before the regular end of the legislative period early elections will be held on 16 March 2014. The senior partner of the acting government coalition, namely the right-wing conservative Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) has applied for early parliamentary elections in order to solve the reform blockage. The SNS has

repeatedly said that leading politicians of the Socialist Party (SPS), a government coalition member, block the reforms and they have linked them to criminal activities.

At present the SNS has supporters amounting to almost 45%. This high support can mainly be explained by the personality of the party leader and Vice Prime Minister Mr Aleksander Vucic. The 43 year old has obtained several successes in fighting against corruption. Under his leadership oligarchs - who had been regarded as sacrosanct so far - have been arrested and put on trial for the first time in history.

The new elections shall bring a clear distribution of political powers and reforms shall be taken up.

## **India**

### **Court stays execution of deported Indian**

India's Supreme Court has stayed the execution of the Sikh extremist Mr Devinder Pal Singh Bhullar. A new medical report shall investigate whether the man, now 48 is mentally ill. The judges pointed to a fundamental judgment the Constitutional Court made last week. According to this judgment death sentences can be modified to life imprisonment in case of "unreasonable, disproportionate and inordinate delays". At present, India has almost 500 convicts on death row. Although no executions have been carried out for many years, however, there have been some executions again since November 2012 in rare cases.

In December 1994 Mr Bhullar was arrested on Frankfurt airport with a falsified passport and deported in 1995. Immediately after his return he was arrested. A court sentenced him to death owing to his participation in an attack in New Delhi in 1993 where nine people were killed. Two years later the *[German]* Administrative Court in Frankfurt (Verwaltungsgericht) condemned the deportation as statutory violation. Although it was correct not to acknowledge the grounds for asylum, Germany should not have deported Mr Bhullar to India.

Several times German politicians have stood up for the death candidate. In 2011 the then Federal German President Mr Christian Wulff said in a letter to his counterpart Ms Pratibha Patil that he is sorry that Mr Bhullar's plea for mercy was rejected. In May last year Federal German President Mr Joachim Gauck and the then Foreign Minister Mr Guido Westerwelle called on their counterparts to modify the death sentence to life imprisonment.

## **China**

### **Activists sentenced**

On 26 January 2014 a court in Beijing convicted Mr Xu Zhiyong, the most popular representative of the "Movement of New Citizens" (also called "New Citizens' Movement") to four years of imprisonment. Yuan Dong, another member of the movement was sentenced to 18 months in prison on 29 January 2014 and Hou Xin who also stood on trial was sentenced to a fine. They all were accused of a "breach of law and order". The movement had among others requested from party officials to disclose their financial circumstances.