

Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

21 July 2014

Afghanistan

Security situation

On 15 July 2014 at least 89 people died in a suicide bombing near a mosque and a market in the Urgun district of Paktika province in eastern Afghanistan. Also on 15 July 2014 two government staff were killed in the explosion of a remote controlled bomb planted below their bus in Kabul. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the bombing. On 17 July 2014 Taliban attacked Kabul airport. They occupied the shell of a high-rise building and fired at the airport. Afghan security forces killed the attackers after a five-hour shoot-out.

Number of victims rises in the first six months of 2014

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported 4,853 civilian victims in the first six months of 2014 (1,564 fatalities and 3,289 wounded). Thus the number of civilian victims was 24% higher than in the first six months of 2013. For the first time since 2009 battles on the ground and shoot-outs claimed more civilian victims (dead or wounded) than IEDs. The anti-government rebels were responsible for almost three quarters of the civilian victims. Most casualties resulted in the south and southeast, the Pash-tun settlement areas near the border to Pakistan.

Pakistan

Military offensive in North Waziristan continues

The military announced the killing of almost 500 extremists during the one month of military offensive in the North Waziristan tribal area in which also 28 soldiers died. The most recent deaths were 15 militant Islamists who died in a US drone attack and another 50 who died in airstrikes of the Pakistani air force. Over 900,000 people have fled the area.

Assaults

On 18 July 2014 a group of policemen was assaulted in a restaurant in Peshawar in north-west Pakistan, three of them and one waiter died. Two further policemen were injured. Just before a police officer had been killed in a bomb attack on his car.

Iraq

Evolution of the situation

On 15 July 2014 the Iraqi government launched a new offensive to reconquer the city of Tikrit that is under IS control. The first announcements said that several government buildings had been taken, shortly thereafter there were news of the retreat of the Iraqi army after it had met with fierce resistance. Also on 15 July 2014 at least twelve people are reported dead and at least 45 injured as a result of a bombing in the predominantly Shiite Baghdad district of Sadr City. Earlier two car bombs planted on the motorway between Baghdad and Tikrit exploded beneath a military convoy, killing at least five people and wounding 23. On 17 July 2014 at least ten people lost their lives in two explosions in Baghdad. Dozens were injured. There are reports that government troops succeeded in fighting back a rebel attack on the Shiite city of Amirli on 17 July 2014. In

one of the most serious series of attacks in 2014 at least 24 people died (over 70 were injured) on 19 July 2014 when car bombs detonated in at least five different locations in Baghdad. The Shiite district of al-Kasimiya was affected most.

The UN reported a death toll of over 5,500 civilians in Iraq in the first six months of 2014.

Formation of government

The Sunni Salim al-Jaburi was elected as the new speaker of parliament on 15 July 2014. The election was at least a partial break-through in the political stalemate in Iraq. According to the constitution the parliament must now elect a new president of state within 30 days. Prime Minister al-Maliki still refuses to refrain from seeking a third term in office despite mounting national and international pressure. After prolonged treatment for a stroke in Germany Iraqi President Talabani will return to Iraq on 19 July 2014.

Syria

IS controls over one third of the national territory

The Syrian Human Rights Observatory announced that the terror group Islamic State (IS), formerly ISIS or ISIL, is now controlling over 35% of Syrian territory. Early last week IS took control of the city of Deir ez-Zor and some surrounding towns from other opponents of the government and is now in power in most of the province of the same name. After heavy fighting IS fighters conquered the gas field Shaar east of Homs, 115 Assad-loyal forces and 21 IS rebels died in the battle. IS controls much of the area in the north and east of Syria.

Two women stoned to death

The Syrian Human Rights Observatory reported that in the village of Tabaka (Tabka) in ar-Raqqa province a religious court sentenced an about 26-year-old widow to stoning for adultery. The sentence had been executed on 17 July 2014 in a public place. The villagers were allegedly 'appalled', but did not take any action. On 18 July 2014 another women was stoned on charges of adultery by IS fighters in the city of Raqqa after the inhabitants had refused to execute the stoning.

Severe water shortage in Aleppo

According to activists a humanitarian disaster is imminent in the city of Aleppo. Due to the permanent fighting large parts of Aleppo have been without running water since early May 2014 and the al-Nusra front rebels are blocking the water supply in the government controlled areas. The opponents are accusing the Syrian regime of intentionally refusing to repair one of the damaged main lines.

Palestinian Autonomous Areas

The situation in the Gaza Strip

After Israel stepped up its ground offensive in the Gaza Strip the situation of the Palestinians population is deteriorating fast. Local rescue workers said that over 500 people died in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the Israeli military offensive on 08 July 2014; only on 20 July 2014 there were over 60 casualties (according to other sources at least 97). 3,150 persons were wounded among them many women and children. The Palestinian Center for Human Rights reports that 130,000 inhabitants abandoned their houses. The Israeli army announced that so far 18 soldiers and 2 civilians were killed in the fighting on the Israeli side. Israel aims to destroy Hamas' military infrastructure, in particular the tunnels through which Hamas intends to infiltrate Israel underground.

Turkey

Protests against Israel

In response to Israel's ground operations in the Gaza Strip violent protests were held in Turkey in front of the Israeli representations in Ankara and Istanbul in the night to 18 July 2014. The Israeli Consulate General was

attacked in Istanbul by protesters who smashed the windows with stones trying to gain access to the consulate premises. Israel called back its embassy staff and the Israeli foreign ministry announced that the representations in Turkey would continue to operate with minimum emergency staffing only. The Turkish police had failed to protect the embassy in Ankara and the consulate in Istanbul adequately, it said. The Turkish news agency Dogan reported that prior to these incidents Prime Minister Erdogan had called Israel's actions against the Palestinians genocide.

Iran

Nuclear negotiations

The negotiations about the future of Iran's controversial nuclear programme will be extended until the end of November 2014. "Despite clear advances on several issues and work on a comprehensive joint plan of action, considerable gaps remain in some central points which require more time and effort", EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif said in Vienna on the weekend. Together with the international group of six (United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, France, Germany) it had therefore been resolved to extend the interim agreement of November last year until 24 November 2014.

Tunisia

Closure of radical mosques

After two bloody attacks on Tunisian border patrols the government stepped up its action against extremist networks. On 20 July 2014 it ordered the closure of mosques advocating radical Islamist views. This concerns all mosques that are not under the control of the ministry of religious affairs and in which the killing of the 15 soldiers had been celebrated. They are accused of disseminating Islamist fundamentalism. Furthermore there are plans to close down all unlicensed TV and radio stations that are proclaiming jihad and portraying certain persons as infidels. On 19 July 2014 there were extensive raids of suspected extremists during which 60 people were arrested.

Egypt

Check point attacked

Heavily armed extremists who seemingly came from Libya, attacked an army check point in the country's west near the oasis of Farafra killing 21 soldiers (according to other sources there were 31 casualties) on 20 July 2014. Also three of the attackers died in the fighting. The Egyptian army reports that three camps training 2,000 to 4,000 extremists are located in the east of Libya. Most of the trainees are believed to be Egyptians, Libyans, Syrians, and Palestinians, styling themselves as the "Free Egyptian Army".

Nigeria

Boko Haram's civilian death toll in the first six months of 2014 exceeds 2,000

„Human Rights Watch“ (HRW) published a report on 15 July 2014 which says that the Islamist terror group Boko Haram killed at least 2,053 civilians in an estimated 95 attacks in Nigeria in the first six months of 2014. Most affected was the north-eastern state of Borno where 1,446 people were killed (Adamawa: 151; Yobe: 143), many of them in bomb attacks. HRW arrived at the figures after a detailed evaluation of media reports and on-the-spot investigations. The organisation considers Boko Haram's crimes to be crimes against humanity as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Boko Haram attacks

In two attacks by Boko Haram fighters of the city of Damboa (administrative seat of the Local Government Area (LGA) of the same name in the north-eastern state of Borno) depending on the source of information between 40 or over 1000 were killed and substantial parts of the city were burnt down between 17 and 19 July 2014. To demonstrate its victory the group raised its flag in the city whose only defence had been a local

militia. Already about two weeks ago the military and the police had been driven from Damboa in fighting with Boko Haram, an attempt by the military to return into the town had failed.

On 14 July 2014 around 6am (according to other sources already in the night of 13 July 2014) fighters, presumably of Boko Haram, entered the village of Dille, LGA Askira-Uba with off-road vehicles and motorcycles. Depending on the source of information they killed between five and over 40 civilians. Most of the village was destroyed, including three churches. The military reported that fighter planes had killed several of the attackers during the incident, while other reports say that the planes had fired at villagers on the run who had obviously been mistaken for attackers, some of them were killed.

Already over 500 casualties in conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in 2014

The Society for Threatened Peoples (GfbV) announced on 16 July 2014 that violence in the conflict between sedentary, mostly Christian farmers (e.g. the Tiv) and the nomadic Muslim herdsmen of the Fulani is escalating in central Nigeria. It has claimed at least 522 lives since the beginning of the year. The last assault happened in the morning of 14 July 2014 when villagers were attacked presumably by Fulani herdsmen who shot more than 50 people in the Gidanawa district of Maradun Local Government Area in Zamfara state. In the early hours of the morning of the same day ten villagers had been killed, probably also by Fulani herdsmen, in the villages of Zama Dede and Ganlang in Pilgani district, Langtang North LGA in Plateau state. Between 25 and 29 June 2014 more than 200 died in 20 villages that were allegedly attacked by Fulani herdsmen in Kaduna State. The background to this conflict about land and grazing rights is that about 35 percent of the pastures in northern Nigeria have turned into desert over the last 50 years forcing the herdsmen to find new grazing land further south.

Kenya

Coach and police car attacked

In the evening of 18 July 2014 armed men held up a coach near the coastal town of Witu (about 50 km west of the tourist island of Lamu). After stopping the bus with a vehicle as road block they opened fire with automatic rifles. When a police car approached they attacked the police as well. The attackers killed four policemen, two passengers and the bus driver. On 19 July 2014 the terror organization Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack. Which it said was the response to the military's announcement that more military had been deployed along the coast and thus improved the security situation.

Ethiopia

Terrorism charges

Terrorism charges were brought against six staff members of the Zone9 blog and against three independent journalists on 17 July 2014. They had been arrested at the end of April 2014. Another collaborator of Zone9 was indicted in absentia.

Uganda

The situation of street children

According to a report by Human Rights Watch of 17 July 2014 street children are the victims of violence including physical and sexual abuse. The police, local government officials, members of the community and older homeless children and adults were violating the human rights of street children with impunity.

Mali

Peace talks between the Mali government and rebel groups

Peace talks between the Mali government and six rebel groups started in Algiers (Algeria) on 16 July 2014. Three of the groups refused to join in the negotiations with the other groups, therefore the Mali government must hold separate negotiations. No information about the talks is available as yet. As a manifestation of

good will prisoners were exchanged before the talks began. 45 Malian soldiers and 41 Tuareg rebels were released.

Suicide attack

A French non-commissioned officer was killed in a suicide attack on 15 July 2014 for which the extremist group founded by the Islamist Mokhtar Belmokhta claimed responsibility.

Algeria

Security forces attacked

The Algerian ministry of defence informed that seven soldiers were killed in a bombing in Sidi Bel-Abbes province in north-western Algeria on 12 July 2014. This is the most serious attack since eleven soldiers died in Kabylei region in April. AQMI (Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb) had assumed responsibility for that attack.

South Sudan

Violation of the ceasefire

Rebels associated with former vice-president Riek Machar attacked the small town of Nasir in Upper Nile State on 20 July 2014. In May 2014 the army of South Sudan had reconquered Nasir, the rebels' stronghold. UNMISS (United Nations Mission in South Sudan) and the government of South Sudan termed the attack a clear violation of the ceasefire agreed in January and confirmed in May 2014 and an attempt to derail the peace efforts, the rebels, however, called their action an act of self-defence. Allegedly they attacked to prevent attempts to arrest their military commanders. The outcome of the fighting is still unknown.

Ukraine

Malaysia Airline passenger plane crashed in Eastern Ukraine

In the crash of the passenger plane which was presumably shot down near Donetsk on 17 July 2014 all of the 283 passengers and 15 crew members died, among them 193 Dutch and four German citizens. The official Ukrainian rescue services informed that 196 bodies had been found, while the search for the other victims was difficult, because the wreckage was spread over many square kilometres.

At the site of the crash the situation is chaotic. Reportedly heavily armed and sometimes masked separatists are obstructing the investigations of an OSCE mission. Pro-Russian rebels are suspected of having shot down the airplane with ground-to-air-missiles from 10,000 m altitude. The US ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, did not exclude the possibility that Russian staff helped to operate the system. The Russian leadership denied any responsibility and criticized the reports saying that the aircraft had been shot down as premature. The Moscow foreign ministry said that this obviously served to bias the investigators.

China

Monk commits suicide to protest restrictions

On 17 July 2014 Radio Free Asia reported that a monk in Gansu province hung himself to protest against the restrictions imposed by authorities to control life in the monasteries. It said that the incident happened already on 9 July 2014 in Xiahe district in Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Since 2009 131 self-immolations of Tibetans became known that can be considered protests against the Chinese supremacy.