

## Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

10 August 2015

### Afghanistan

#### Security situation

There were more battles and attacks last week, some also affected the capital Kabul. On 06 August 15 a suicide bomber killed six and wounded 26 civilians in an attack on a police station in Logar province (centre). On 07 August 15 Kabul was shaken by attacks on a police academy and a US military base. Over 50 people died and more than 240 were wounded. On 09 August 15 two civilians died when their bus hit a landmine in Kandahar (south), and in Khost (east) another six civilians lost their lives in an explosion. A suicide bomber took at least 21 lives in the northern province of Kunduz on 08 August 15. In the northern province of Baghlan twelve mosques were set on fire in the last ten days.

There was further fighting in Nangarhar (east), Badakhshan, Kunduz (north-east), Jawzjan, Sar-i-Pul (north), Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul (south), Paktika, Ghazni (south-east), Logar (centre), and Kabul (Sarobi district). In Nangarhar (east) 74 fighters of both sides were killed in fighting between followers of IS and the Taliban on 06 August 15.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that 1,592 civilians had been killed and 3,329 injured in the first six months of 2015. This means that the number of civilian casualties has increased by one percent against the same period last year.

#### Taliban hang woman for extramarital relationship

A woman accused of having an extramarital relationship was publicly hanged in Badakhshan province (north-east) on 08 August 15.

### Iraq

#### Assaults

At least 13 members of the Iraqi security forces died in an attack on policemen and allied militias in Diyala province on 05 August 15. Another nine people were wounded. Investigations indicated that IS was responsible for the attack, this was, however, not yet confirmed by IS. At least 120 people were killed in an attack in Diyala province in July 2015 for which IS claimed responsibility.

In attacks in the Shiite districts of Baghdad a minimum of ten people were killed according to press reports of 05 August 15. A car explosion in Sadr City claimed at least six lives and injured twelve people. In another explosion in the al-Husseiniya district at least four people were killed and eleven wounded.

#### Supply situation

On 04 August 15 the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that it will temporarily suspend 184 health care service stations in ten Iraqi administrative districts. WHO said that 84% of the health programmes were thus shut down because of a severe funding shortfall.

#### Protests against poor supply with basic utilities

The ongoing problems in the provision of basic supplies, particularly water and electricity, in large parts of Iraq triggered a number of protests. The protesters blamed corruption and the administration's inefficiency

for the situation. Protests, all of which remained peaceful, were reported specifically from Baghdad, Basra, Nassirija, Najaf, Kerbala, and Hilla. Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi announced reforms to fight corruption and a commission to look into charges of corruption against government officials.

## **Turkey**

### **Suicide attack in Istanbul suburb**

A media report stated that two people died in a shoot-out after an explosion in front of a police station in Sultanbeyli, a suburb of the Turkish metropolis Istanbul. The Dogan news agency reported on 10 August 15 that the victims were the two attackers and that ten more people were wounded. So far the police merely confirmed that three policemen and seven civilians were wounded during the attacks, but no casualties. The media also reported that fire had been exchanged in front of the US consulate in Istanbul before. Two attackers has fired shots in front of the building on Monday morning, but no-one had been wounded, CNN Türk reported.

### **Confrontations with the PKK**

The Turkish air force continued its raids of PKK positions in north Iraq last week. The Turkish government initiated investigations about alleged civilian victims during air raids in the Kandil mountains. The PKK continued its attacks on police and army posts in Turkey, so far at least 15 members of the security forces lost their lives. Protests and clashes with the police occurred in several cities in the south-east of Turkey.

### **Investigations against Kurdish politician**

The official news agency Anadolu reported that the Turkish prosecution authorities initiated investigations against the chairman of the pro-Kurdish HDP party, Selahattin Demirtas, on 30 July 15. He is accused of having incited Kurds to armed protests in October 2014 in which more than 40 people died. At the time IS had been advancing on the Syrian-Kurdish city of Kobane and the Kurds had reproached the Turkish government for not providing sufficient support. Demirtas also denies that he is maintaining contact with the PKK or that he receives instructions from it. Demirtas has meanwhile repeatedly called for a ceasefire and the resumption of negotiations.

President Erdogan requested the parliament to lift immunity for deputies suspected of maintaining relations with the PKK. This was aimed at HDP that had achieved sizeable gains in the parliamentary elections in early June and caused AKP to lose its absolute majority.

### **Journalist indicted**

Last week 18 journalists were indicted for alleged terrorist propaganda in Turkey. The Istanbul prosecution is demanding prison sentences of up to seven and a half years. The defendants work for nine different newspapers and include Can Dündar, the editor in chief of the paper „Cumhuriyet" that is critical of the government. In March 2015 the journalists had published photos showing a prosecutor who had been taken hostage by terrorists of the leftist DHKP-C group in his office in Istanbul for seven hours. The terrorists had published these photos on social media. In an attempt to liberate the hostage the prosecutor and the two hostage-takers had been killed. The prosecutor had been responsible for the charges in the case of the youth Berkin Elvan who had been fatally wounded by tear gas cartridges fired by the police during the Gezi protests in 2013.

## **Syria**

### **Fighting continues/IS abducts Christians**

30 fighters are said to have been killed in an IS attack on four villages in the north of Aleppo province on 09 August 15.

Eleven people, including three children, died and 46 were wounded, some seriously, in a missile attack on Damascus on 08 August 15. The Syrian Human Rights Observatory and the Syrian Orthodox church reported that IS took control of several towns inhabited by Assyrian Christians in recent days and abducted hundreds of the inhabitants. On 09 August 15 at least 230 people were still missing without any trace of their

whereabouts. On 06 August 15 IS conquered the city of Qariyatain (population about 40,000) in Homs province and then advanced in the direction of the towns Mhin and Sadad.

The US and its allies have been fighting IS for one year already (since 08 August 14) and the US have spent USD 3.5 bn on this effort so far. Together with its allies the US flew almost 6,000 air raids and killed about 10,000 IS fighters. But it is assumed that IS has another 20,000 – 30,000 men under arms, because it can replenish its ranks with new recruits and also has sufficient funds from looting banks, selling oil, protection money, taxes and stolen goods. IS has been driven out of an area extending over 17,000 sq km in Syria's north with the help of Kurdish militias (YPG). IS is not controlling 300 km of the Syrian border with Turkey anymore, but merely 110 km.

### **UN resolution against use of chlorine gas in Syria**

On 07 August 15 the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution commissioning UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to prepare investigations into the use of chlorine gas in Syria. If those responsible for the use of the gas can be determined the Security Council can also impose sanctions. Although chlorine is not included in the convention on banned chemical weapons, as it may also be used for non-military purposes, its use as a weapon is banned.

## **Iran**

### **Cultural minister promises more freedom of the press**

Iranian culture minister Ali Jannati announced that the country's media would be granted more freedom. As ISNA news agency reported the minister declared his intention to reform the law of the press on 09 August 15. Under the current law a critical article can be interpreted as a risk to national interests or treason. Because of this several newspapers were banned over the last years. Foreign media are to benefit from less strict laws as well. According to Jannati a new commission will be responsible for foreign journalists that will consist of representatives from the ministries for culture, foreign affairs, and information. This commission would issue visas and a work permit for at least ten days for Iran. He also said that critical media representatives that are blacklisted because of so-called "hostile" articles, will be readmitted to Iran. The list is said to also contain the names of several German journalists.

## **Palestinian Autonomous Areas**

### **Infant mortality is significantly up in the Gaza Strip**

In a study published on the weekend the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) stated that for the first time in over half a century infant mortality in Gaza is up. According to the study infant mortality had been falling smoothly since 1960: while 127 of 1,000 children under the age of one died in 1960, the figure was down to 20.2 by 2008. However, latest data for 2013 indicate an increase to 22.4. According to these data twelve of 1,000 infants died in the first four weeks after birth in 2008, however in 2013 20,3 did not survive their first four weeks. The head of the UNWRA health programme, Akihiro Seita, said that the sudden increase was without parallel. Seita also said that Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip might have been a contributing factor.

## **Yemen**

### **Air strike near provincial capital Sinjibar**

In friendly fire opened by mistake the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen killed at least eight people. Local journalists reported that another 16 government loyal fighters sustained injuries in an attack near the provincial capital Sinjibar in the south-east on 08 August 15. The alliance covered the region with air strikes to support the opponents of the insurgent Houthi rebels. There were reports that pro-government militias had taken full control of Sinjibar, the contested centre of Abijan province, on 09 August 15. The Shiite Houthi rebels have been on the defensive in Yemen's south since mid-July. They lost control of the important port city of Aden, of the southern province of Lahij and of one of the country's largest air bases.

## **Libya**

### **Casualties in car bomb attack**

When a car bomb detonated in the eastern port city of Derna on 09 August 15 seven people died and reportedly 19 were injured. As yet nobody has claimed responsibility for the attack. Derna inhabitants said that IS attempted to retake the port city last Sunday.

## **Burundi**

### **Assault on human rights activist**

On 03 August 15 unknown gunmen shot at and injured Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, a prominent human rights activist and President of the Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Incarcerated Persons (APRODH), in Bujumbura. Reportedly his injuries are not life-threatening and he is receiving medical treatment in Belgium.

### **Assaults on alleged government critics**

In a report published on 06 August 15 Human Rights Watch documented more than 148 assaults on suspected government critics. The report says that the police, the secret service and the pro-government youth organization Imbonerakure were responsible for arbitrary arrests, abuse, and torture in four provinces and the capital Bujumbura between April and July of 2015. The number of cases is expected to be even higher for the country as a whole.

## **Central African Republic**

### **Current situation**

The UN Special Representative for the Central African Republic and Head of the UN Mission MINUSCA, Babacar Gaye, reported to the UN Security Council on 05 August 15, saying that the overall security situation in the country had improved. This was the result of political progress and the stationing of UN peace forces at almost 40 locations. Nevertheless the security situation remained precarious. The humanitarian situation continued to be of concern. More than 2.7 million people required assistance.

## **South Sudan**

### **Negotiations resumed**

On 05 August 15 a new round of negotiations between the government of South Sudan and the rebels around former vice-president Riek Machar started in Addis Ababa. The discussion centres on a proposal for compromise submitted by the east-African regional organization IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority for Development) and the African Union that provides for an interim government in which both President Salva Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar participate. IGAD is planning to impose sanctions, if the parties to the conflict fail to come to an agreement by 17 August 15.

Until now the conflict that started in December 2013 has claimed 20,000 lives. About 2.2 million people were either displaced or fled.

## **Nigeria**

### **Attacks and suicide bombing by Boko Haram**

On 09 August 15 fighters that were suspected to belong to Boko Haram assaulted a car with six passengers on the road from Damboa to Biu in Borno state. Two of the passengers were shot, two injured.

On 05 August 15 Boko Haram fighters attacked the villages of Tadagara and Dunbulwa (Fika LGA) in the north-eastern state of Yobe killing at least 25 villagers, looting houses and businesses and burning down buildings.

#### **Niger Delta: Pirate attack on „Joint Task Force“**

On 07 August 15 suspected pirates in four speed boats attacked the base of the "Joint Task Force" of the military and the police located in the city of Nembe in the southern state of Bayelsa. They killed four soldiers and one policeman and stole weapons. In response to the attack the army destroyed a militants' camp and arrested six of them. They confiscated a large amount of weapons and ammunition as well as three speed-boats.

## **Mali**

#### **Further attacks**

In what is believed to be an attack by Islamists on the village of Gaberi in north-eastern Mali at least ten people were killed on 09 August 15. A hostage taking was ended after more than 24 hours in a hotel in Sévaré (central Mali) on 08 August 15 leaving at least twelve people dead, among them five members of MINUSMA. Already on 03 August 15 at least ten soldiers had been killed in an attack on a base in Gourma-Rharous (near Timbuktu). The army assumes that the attacks were executed by the Islamist Tuareg group Ansar Dine. Two soldiers were killed in an attack of a military convoy on the road linking Nampala and Diabaly (about 400 km north of Bamako) on 01 August 15.

## **Senegal**

#### **Islamic conference in Dakar**

On 31 July 15 about 500 Muslim religious leaders and experts from Africa gathered in Dakar to consult on how to take measures against Islamist terror, how to improve the global image of Islam and to intensify the dialogue between religions. The experts recognized a trend of different Islamic currents developing in the Arab and the African countries. Since Arabian Islam often has orthodox characteristics and is spread aggressively particularly in sub-Saharan countries, uncertainty and fear of terrorism are also spreading in African Muslim countries. No specific measures were adopted.

## **Chad**

#### **Death sentence reintroduced**

In its fight against the Boko Haram terror group Chad has reinstated the death penalty. The parliament unanimously adopted a law providing for the death penalty for serious acts of terrorism. Under the new law the police can hold suspects for up to 30 days without bringing charges (the period used to be 48 hours). The penalty for less serious acts of terrorism is increased from 20 years imprisonment to life.

Chad had been in the process of totally abolishing the death penalty. There had been a moratorium on executions since 1991 which was interrupted only once (in 2003).

Also other African countries have reintroduced capital punishment after they had previously suspended or abolished it. In mid-July 2015 Gambia ended the suspension of executions it had introduced in 2012.

## **Western Balkans**

#### **Video information campaign against poverty migration**

A "return video" in the local languages is to be shown in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The purpose of the four minute video clip, that was published on 07 August 15, is the information of people from the Western Balkan countries about the minimal prospects of being granted asylum in Germany. In the video the federal government is warning: „Do not ruin yourself and your family financially and economically to pay for being smuggled to Germany“.

For several months already the foreign missions are using newspaper ads, TV appearances and visits to the most affected regions in an attempt to impress upon the people that they only stand a minimal chance of being accepted (see BN of 03 August 15).

## **Kosovo/Montenegro**

### **Governments are seeking classification as safe countries of origin**

The prime ministers of Kosovo (Isa Mustafa) and of Montenegro (Milo Djukanovic) are pushing to have their countries recognized as „safe countries of origin“ in Germany. The governments are assuring their citizens that they need not fear any political persecution. They said that there are no political reasons why any of their citizens needed to seek asylum in another country.

## **Kosovo**

### **Parliament votes in favour of war crimes tribunal**

After months of political struggles and only after yielding to massive pressure of the US and the EU, the parliament gave the green light for a special tribunal by amending the constitution. The tribunal shall examine war crimes committed by the meanwhile disbanded Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) between 1998 and the end of the year 2000. Among other things former UCK members are accused of summary executions and kidnappings and of having removed and sold organs from prisoners. So far it has been impossible to criminally prosecute the top UCK ranks.

The opposition boycotted the vote. UCK veterans protested in front of the parliament. In the eyes of many the UCK fighters are still heroes. The special tribunal under the auspices of the EU will probably convene in early 2016 for the first time. It is designed as a part of Kosovo's judiciary; however, extremely sensitive trials will probably take place abroad.

The establishment of this tribunal is a result of the report published by the then Special Rapporteur of the Council of Europe, Dick Marty, in 2011. Allegations were also raised against Foreign Minister Hashim Thaçi and current leading figures especially in the Democratic Party (PDK).

## **FYR Macedonia**

### **Refugee crisis - calls for EU assistance**

Macedonia is demanding urgent help from the European Union to cope with the refugee crisis. Every day more than 2,000 people are illegally crossing the Greek-Macedonian border. According to the UNHCR 124,000 people had arrived in Greece until the end of July (see BN of 03 August 15).

### **Large scale raid against Islamists**

A large scale raid took place in five cities (Skopje, Struga, Kumanovo, Tetovo, and Gostivar) on 04 August 15 during which several people were arrested. They are suspected of having fought in Syria for IS or of having recruited fighters for IS. Reportedly an imam from Skopje is also among those arrested. The operation was mainly directed against the Albanian (Muslim) population.

## **Montenegro**

### **Wahhabis expelled**

On 03 August 15 the police of Montenegro expelled four Wahhabis from Serbia and Bosnia staying without residence permits in Podgorica from the country for reasons of national security.

It is estimated that there are about 100 to 120 Wahhabis in Montenegro, concentrating in the village of Plav in the north-east on the border to Kosovo and Albania.

## **Ukraine**

### **Arson of OSCE vehicles**

Four armoured vehicles of the OSCE observers were fully destroyed and three others almost destroyed by an act of arson in Donetsk in the night of 08 to 09 August 15. No-one was injured. Separatist leader Denis Pushilin stated that his group was not interested in an end of the OSCE mission. Over 500 OSCE staff are staying in the crisis zone as observers.

Since 07 August 15 the situation has become even more tense. On 07 August 15 violations of the ceasefire were reported at Donetsk airport and on 09 August 15 fire exchanges in the rebel-occupied city of Horlivka.

## **India**

### **Peace agreement with Nagaland rebels**

On 03 August 15 the Indian government struck a peace agreement with NSCN-IM (National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah), the most significant rebel group in the Nagaland union state. The conflict involving the ethnic minority of the Naga dates back to India's independence in 1947. Nagaland is considered the most restless region after Kashmir. No details of the agreement were disclosed. The negotiations had failed before because the rebels insisted on independent statehood for the about two million Nagas' settlement area. Further members of the ethnic group live in neighbouring Myanmar and the surrounding states of the Indian union.

It remains to be seen whether the agreement can really end the conflict, because a NSCN splinter group that formed in 1988 has not yet commented on the negotiations. It operates from Myanmar and is considered to be less open to compromise. This group killed 26 members of the Indian army in June to which the military responded with retaliation operations.

## **China**

### **State action against civil rights lawyers**

The China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group (CHRLCG) reported that until 07 August 15 a total of 267 lawyers, law office staff and activists had been targeted by state reprisals such as temporary arrests or interrogations in the course of a recent series of actions taken against civil rights lawyers (see BN of 13 July 15). Over 20 are said to remain under arrest to this date.