

Group 41 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

2 December 2013

Afghanistan . . .

Draft of new penal code makes provision for stoning and flogging

The human rights organisation Human Rights Watch has reported that the draft of a new penal code in Afghanistan provides for death by stoning for adultery if one of the partners is married. It says that unmarried people who have sex will be flogged 100 times. Up to now the government has rejected corporal punishment under sharia law although it has been carried out in regions ruled by the Taliban and where the Afghan state has insufficient representation.

It was, for instance, announced on 25 November 2013 that a young unmarried couple had been killed in Baghlan province. A tribal council sentenced them to death and the girl's father subsequently shot the couple dead.

Security situation

In Farhaj province, northern Afghanistan, six employees of the French aid organisation ACTED were ambushed and murdered and one staff member was seriously wounded when Taliban insurgents stopped their vehicle in Pashtun Kot district on 27 November 2013.

One child was killed and two women were wounded in a drone strike by the US Army in Garmsir District of Helmand province in southern Afghanistan.

In the assessment of the UN, the threat to staff members of the aid organisation is rising. The UN says it has recorded 237 incidences against humanitarian workers and that 36 staff members have been killed. A UN report published on 1 December 2013 said Afghanistan is the "most dangerous country in the world for humanitarian workers".

Pakistan . . .

Attack on polio vaccination team

On 30 November 2013, extremists killed a policeman in an attack on polio vaccination workers in the city of Peshawar. Polio vaccination teams are frequently the target of attacks in Pakistan.

New Army Chief General appointed

Pakistan's President Mamnoon Hussain appointed General Raheel Sharif Army Chief General on 27 November 2013. Sharif will take the baton of command from General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani who routinely completed his three-year term of office.

Iraq . . .

Security situation

On 23 November 2014, at least 40 persons were killed and around 100 were wounded. Baghdad and Mosul were the worst affected cities.

On 26 November 2013, between 20 and 30 persons were killed according to various reports.

On 27 November 2013, at least 75 persons were killed and 98 were wounded. Baghdad and Mosul were the worst affected cities. According to a press report, police officers found the dead bodies of 14 men in a residential district that is inhabited mainly by Sunni Muslims and has a large Shia population.

On 28 November 2013, between 38 and 60 persons were killed. A series of coordinated bombings hit towns south of Baghdad, such as Hilla and Jbela in Babil province, Suwayra (Wassit province), Nassiriya (Thi Qar province). Bombings also occurred in Baghdad, Tikrit and Mosul.

At least 52 persons were killed on 29 November 2013. Baghdad had the highest death toll, where at least 37 persons were killed.

According to varying reports, between 20 and 30 persons were killed in Tikrit, Baghdad, Tuz Khurmato, Baiji and Mosul on 30 November 2013.

At least 44 persons were killed and more than 70 were wounded on 1 December 2013. Baghdad and Diyala were the worst affected areas.

According to Iraq Body Count, 903 civilians were killed in the month of November 2013 (death toll in 2013 so far as at: 30 November 2013) more than 8,200 civilians have been killed.

According to reports by UNAMI, 565 civilians were killed and 1,186 were wounded in November 2013. 94 members of the Iraqi security forces were killed and 187 were wounded. Baghdad was the province worst hit following by the provinces of Ninive, Salahaddin and Diyala.

7,157 civilians and 952 members of the Iraqi security forces were killed between January and November 2013 according to reports by UNAMI.

Syria

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International peace conference scheduled for January 2014

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon scheduled an international peace conference for Syria on 25 November 2013 following several delays. The peace conference is due to take place on 22 January 2014. The Syrian government and members of the opposition are to engage in direct negotiations for the very first time. The goal is to agree on a mutually acceptable transitional administration. The Syrian government and the Syrian National Coalition opposition group which is backed by the West will be taking part in the conference. The Free Syrian Army has announced that it will be boycotting the event.

More than one million children are refugees

According to a report published by UN refugee agency UNHCR, more than one million Syrian children have fled the civil war to other countries; 385,000 to Lebanon alone, 294,000 to Turkey and 291,000 to Jordan. This is the biggest refugee catastrophe since the genocide in Rwanda. The report said many children have been traumatised. According to research conducted by the London non-governmental organisation Oxford Research Group, more than 11,400 children had been killed by the end of August 2013.

Lebanon

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Shooting between supporters and opponents of Assad Tripoli

On 30 November 2013, an Alavite from a pro-Assad district was shot dead in the city of Tripoli, triggering gunfire between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime. The Army intervened. At least four persons were reportedly killed. On 1 December 2013, at least three persons were killed by a gunman in Tripoli. The Syrian civil war in which the Lebanese Hezbollah is fighting on the side of the Syrian regime is slowly but surely spilling over into Lebanon.

Libya

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Mausoleum destroyed

On 28 November 2013, unknown perpetrators planted explosives around a mausoleum of Murad Agha, the first Ottoman governor of Tripoli, who ruled in the 16th century. The mausoleum is right beside an important mosque. It is suspected that the Islamist Ansar-al-Sharia Brigade is responsible for the attack.

In the early hours of 26 November 2013, militiamen exchanged gunfire with troops in Bengasi, killing several persons and wounding many.

The Ansar al-Sharia is the largest Salaf group of extremists in Libya, their military wing consisting of former rebels.

Tunisia ...

Violent demonstrations

More than fifty Tunisian policeman were injured in clashes with protesters in the marginalised town of Siliana which is located around 150 kilometres south of the capital Tunis where riots broke out on 27 November 2013. Police vehicles as well as public and private buildings were damaged during the unrest. The trade union association UGTT had declared a general strike in Siliana. Protestors threw stones at the police officers before the crowds were dispersed by police vehicles. The strike and riots which lasted into the night broke out on Wednesday as the town observed a strike to mark the first anniversary of riots that left more than 300 people injured one year ago. The trade union has also accused the authorities of not doing enough to combat poverty and unemployment.

Violence also broke out in the poor central town of Gafsa, where the UGTT had also declared a general strike for 27 November 2013. The protestors have accused the government of neglecting the provincial town, claiming it had been overlooked in plans for new medical facilities. The protestors torched the local headquarters of the ruling Islamist party Ennahda after trying to break into the governor's office.

Egypt ...

More people killed and wounded in violent clashes

One student was killed in violent clashes that erupted between students and the police in Cairo on 28 November 2013. Two persons were killed when riots broke out between Christians and Muslims in the southern part of the country on 28 November 2013. According to media reports, ten other persons were wounded in the incident in Al-Minja province. Several rallies took place in the past week organised by the group "No to military processes against civilians" which is opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood. Criticism is also rife of the new law banning demonstrations which allows police officers to use force in unapproved demonstrations. Mass rallies of the Muslim Brotherhood took place after Friday prayers which police used force to crack down on in several places.

Opposition political activist Abdel Fattah arrested

Alaa Abdel Fattah was arrested by police at his home in Cairo on 28 November 2013. According to security forces, he is accused of allegedly inciting violence. According to sources, the court issued a warrant for the arrest of Abdel Fattah and the activist Ahmed Maher on 27 November 2013. Maher is co-founder of the 6 April youth movement that spearheaded protests against the long-term reign of Mubarak. The public prosecutor has accused them of being in breach of the new law banning demonstrations which obliged them to give three days' notice of protests and to obtain the consent of the Ministry of the Interior.

Draft Constitution submitted

The military government presented the draft of a new constitution on 28 November 2013. It strengthens the role of the Army significantly. Military courts are to be able to rule in civilian trials in future. It provides for a basic ban to be imposed on Islamist parties. The amended constitution presented by the Military Council following the ousting of President Moursi has been scheduled for 3 December 2013. On 1 December 2013, the "Committee of 50" comprising government representatives and all sectors of society adopted all the articles. In January 2014, a referendum, followed by parliamentary elections will decide whether the constitution is to be adopted.

Angola

No state recognition of diverse religious groups

At the end of November, the applications of 170 to 194 religious groups for state recognition - the number varies depending on the source, the majority of them Evangelical - were rejected. They include an umbrella organisation of Angolan Muslims. Contrary to initial reports issued last week, it appears that Islam is not being specifically banned. The Minister of Culture Rosa Cruz e Silva said the government is keen to limit the number of sects in Angola and to crack down on witchery and unlawful migration. The many Evangelical groups which the followers of established churches have been turning to have been the target in recent years. David Já, president of the Islamic Community of Angola (ICA), said that eight mosques had been destroyed in the past two years. Dozens of mosques with the exception of mosques in Luanda have been closed down by the authorities because they were not officially recognised.

Background:

Religious groups are only allowed to build places of worship and schools after they have been recognised by the state. Under Angolan law, a religious group needs more than 100,000 members to gain legal status. It has been estimated that between 80,000 and 90,000 Muslims are living in Angola, according to Muslim sources there are up to 800,000 Muslims in Angola. More than 900 religious organisations have failed to obtain official recognition since 1991. Generally speaking, the state tolerates the activities of more than 2,000 religious groups that are not officially recognised in the country. 83 exclusively Christian groups are officially recognised. More than half the around 20 million Angolan nationals are members of the Catholic Church.

Eritrea

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Highest rate of refugees globally

Eritrea has the highest rate of refugees globally in relation to its population. According to estimates, between 2,000 and 3,000 people leave the country each month - most of them unlawfully crossing the border into Sudan and Ethiopia. The main reason is the indefinite duration of national service. According to reports, cases of unreasonable sentences, torture, inhumane and humiliating treatment as well as imprisonment and inhumane prison conditions have been reported. Female soldiers are the victims of sexual offences by superiors. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea Sheila B. Keetharuth has "major concerns about continuous violations of human rights that has put "hundreds of thousands" of people on the road to exile".

Background:

Eritrea has so-called national service instead of military service. It encompasses tasks in the civil and military sector such as six-month military training. The service is an important instrument of the government for discipline, indoctrination, surveillance and development of the infrastructure. There is no right of conscientious objection or alternative service. Officially, the service lasts 18 months. The failure of the peace process with Ethiopia in the summer of 2012 has led to national service lasting several years.

Uganda

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Army cracks down on opposition

Police arrested Kampala City Lord Mayor Erias Lukwago as well as several members of the opposition on 25 November 2013 and took them to an unknown location. The politicians were planning to state an anti-government rally. The Lord Mayor had been impeached prior to his arrest. According to parliamentarians, other members of the opposition were placed under house arrest. Police have been deployed at the proposed venue and the entrance is being manned by armed cops. The police used tear gas to disperse crowds protesting against the impeachment of the Lord Mayor.

A judge has meanwhile ruled that Lukwago is to be reinstated.

Mali

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Tuareg rebels declare end to ceasefire

Tuareg rebels in the North of Mali announced on 29 November 2013 that they are ending their ceasefire with the Malian government which has held since June, saying that they will be attacking the Army.

This was preceded by an incident on 28 November 2013 in the town of Kidal in the North of the country when the Prime Minister was prevented from landing at the airport for a visit in the region. The statement comes a day after clashes between Malian troops and Tuareg protesters. According to unconfirmed reports, three rebels were killed.

In the early hours of 1 December 2013, a lone rebel raided an international army compound in the town of Menaka. There were reportedly no casualties apart from the rebel who acted alone.

Nigeria . . .

Armed rebels kill villagers in Plateau State

Unidentified gunmen attacked four villages in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State and Mangu Local Government Areas in the early hours of the morning of 26 November 2013. They killed a total of 37 villagers (14 in Katu Kapang, 8 in Daron, 9 in Tul and 7 in Rawuru) in villages inhabited mainly by members of the ethnic group of the Berom. A few days before, the semi-nomadic herdsmen of the mainly Muslim ethnic group of the Fulani reportedly stole cattle and several members of the Fulani were reportedly killed. Intercommunity clashes are frequent in Plateau between the mainly Christian indigenous Berom communities and the Muslim-dominated Fulani nomads.

Human rights violations by Boko Haram and security forces

Islamist Boko Haram rebels have abducted scores of women and girls, used children as young as 12 in hostilities, and killed hundreds of people in recent attacks, Human Rights Watch said today following a nine-day fact-finding mission it made in November 2013 in a report published on 29 November 2013 ("Boko Haram Abducts Women, Recruits Children"). Commanders of the Civilian Joint Task Force, working with security forces, said that they had rescued 26 abducted women and girls from a Boko Haram stronghold in Maiduguri and later in Sambisa Forest. Some of the women and girls were pregnant; others had babies. The commanders told Human Rights Watch that a number of the girls had been abducted while hawking wares on the street or working on farms in remote villages. HRW also accuses the organisation of using children as young as 12 in hostilities.

Human Rights Watch accuses the security forces of arbitrarily detaining hundreds of men particularly in May and June 2013 in Maiduguri. Scores, perhaps hundreds, of these men and boys remain unaccounted for. Witnesses and former detainees credibly assert that detainees died in custody from the appalling detention conditions or were executed by the security services within the 21 Armoured Brigade. Both the detentions and deaths in custody appear to have slowed since July 2013.

Russian Federation . . .

15 members of a radical Islamist group detained in Moscow

Fifteen persons were detained following a raid by security forces in eastern Moscow on 27 November 2013 who are said to belong to the Islamist organisation Takfir wal-Hijraa and have connections in the North Caucasus or allegedly originate from there. These persons had been discovered hiding weapons, explosives and documents in their apartments. Takfir wal-Hijra was quashed in Egypt in the 1970s and was classified as an extremist organisation in the Russian Federation in 2010. It was outlawed by the Supreme Court on 15 September 2010.

Security situation in North Caucasus

According to the online portal "Caucasian Knot", at least 18 persons were wounded in violent clashes in the North Caucasus in the week between 18 November and 24 November 2013. Dagestan was once again the focal point of riots when ten Islamist extremists and three members of the security forces were killed in clashes. Two extremists and two civilians were killed in Kabardino Balkarien and one civilians was killed in Ingushetia.

Ukraine

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Mass rallies in the capital

It is estimated that more than half a million people took part in the mass rallies in Kiev on 1 December 2013. They demanded the resignation of President Viktor Yanukovich and that the government press ahead with integration into the West. Since the early hours of 2 December 2013, around 5,000 supporters of the opposition have set up camp in the city, putting up tents and barricades. The town hall has been occupied by protestors since the afternoon of 1 December 2013. The rallies broke out after President Yanukovich refused to sign an association agreement at the EU summit in Vilnius while intensifying relations with Russia at the same time. The police had cracked down on a demonstration against EU supporters on 30 November 2013. Violent clashes erupted again between security forces and government opponents on 1 December 2013. Although the demonstration was conducted peacefully for the most part, a group of hooligans tried to break through barricades in front of the President's office with the help of a bulldozer. They threw stones and other objects at police officers who used tear gas, flash grenades and truncheons against the protestors. The police officers also attacked journalists. Over 160 persons were wounded. Around 50 security officers and several protestors had to be treated in hospital for their injuries.

Vietnam

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Penalties for anti-government criticism on social networks

Under a law published early last week, any person criticising the state on social media may in future face fines of up to 100 million Dong (around EUR 3,500) provided they are comments that do not constitute criminal offences. These include comments deemed to be "propaganda against the state" or spreading "reactionary ideology". The new decree is vaguely worded and did not say what comments amounted to a criminal offence, which can be punished with prison, or merely constitute an "administrative violation" that rates a fine.

Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka starts counting the civil war dead

Four and a half years after the end of the civil war, the government started counting the dead, wounded and missing in its quarter-century civil war on 27 November 2013. Around 16,000 workers will go house-to-house in 14,000 villages asking about war victims for the count to be completed. The international community is accusing both the rebel organisation LTTE, which has been fighting a 26-year-long battle for an independent state in the North of the country and the Army for causing the deaths of a large number of civilians. Civil rights groups say the whereabouts of several thousand and possibly up to 150,000 people is unknown. The census will also record the number of persons wounded and the damage caused to property. Human rights organisations fear that the census is merely intending to prevent an international inquiry called for by the United Nations.

Bangladesh

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Violent protests against planned parliamentary elections

In recent weeks, rallies have taken place and clashes have erupted repeatedly between government supporters and the opposition. Things came to a head after the date for parliamentary elections was set for 5 January 2014. More than 30 people were reportedly killed in the month of November 2013 alone. According to opposition sources, around 450 protestors have been detained. The controversy surrounding the opposition's demand to instal a neutral interim government that will oversee upcoming elections is behind the unrest. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina refuses to do so.