

Group 22 – Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

23 May 2016

Short version due to current staffing situation!

Afghanistan

NATO military mission extended until 2017

In view of the current security situation in Afghanistan, NATO alliance partners have agreed to extend the Resolute Support mission that trains, advises and assists Afghan security forces until the end of 2017.

Taliban leader Mansoor killed

On 21 May 2016, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, Taliban leader since July 2015, was killed by a drone strike in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province. Mansoor's deputy Sirajuddin Haqqani, commander of the network bearing his name, is widely believed to become his successor. If this were the case, it would be another severe blow to the already faltering peace negotiations with the Taliban. Moreover, last weekend the Taliban called on the Afghan population not to work any longer for the government or international institutions or else to suffer consequences.

Turkey

Parliamentarians stripped of immunity

On 20 May 2016, a bill to amend the constitution to strip MPs of immunity from prosecution was approved by 376 members of the Turkish parliament, with ten more votes than the required two-thirds majority.

Accordingly, some members of the social democrat CHP party also voted for lifting immunity, apart from the ruling AKP and the ultra-nationalist MHP party. The referendum announced by President Erdogan shortly before the vote is no longer necessary now.

With this move, 138 Turkish lawmakers are now facing prosecution, mostly MPs of the pro-Kurdish HDP party. At least 50 of the HDP's 59 parliamentarians are facing conviction for crimes including support or membership of a terrorist organisation. President Erdogan regards the HDP as the political arm of the terrorist organisation PKK.

New Prime Minister

On 22 May 2016, an extraordinary AKP congress elected Turkish transport minister Binali Yildirim as the new party chairman and head of government. On the same day, President Erdogan accepted Prime Minister Davutoglu's resignation and mandated Binali Yildirim to form a new government.

Libya

ISIS advance to Sirte

In May 2016, Human Rights Watch reported that ISIS fighters are terrorizing the inhabitants of the Libyan city of Sirte. Since February 2016, at least 49 people have been executed for alleged blasphemy, sorcery or espionage, the report says. Also, the terror organisation is depriving Sirte's residents not supporting ISIS of food, medicine, fuel and money. Meanwhile, around two-thirds of the city's 80,000 population have fled since ISIS took over, HRW said.

Angola

Yellow fever epidemic

Since December 2015, yellow fever has been spreading in Angola, especially in the capital of Luanda. By mid-May 2016, a total of 2,200 suspected cases of infection have been reported; nearly 300 people have died. Meanwhile, the disease which is spread by infected mosquitoes, appears to have been transmitted to Kenya, DR Congo and China by travellers. A separate outbreak has also been confirmed in Uganda. An emergency committee of the World Health Organisation convened on 19 May 2016, concluding that the outbreaks were a serious public health event, but did not constitute a public health emergency of international concern (as was the case with Ebola and Zika).

DR Congo

Opposition leader Moïse Katumbi brought to South Africa for medical treatment

On 20 May 2016, Moïse Katumbi, President Kabila's main opponent, left the country in a medical evacuation aircraft to South Africa for treatment. In the beginning of May, immediately after his nomination as presidential candidate, the prosecutor general initiated investigations against Katumbi on charges of hiring foreign mercenaries from the U.S. and South Africa for his bodyguard. When Katumbi was summoned to court for the third time in Lubumbashi on 13 May 2016, thousands of his followers gathering before the court building were assaulted with tear gas by the security forces; also Katumbi himself was hurt and brought to hospital. On 19 May 2016, an arrest warrant was issued against him for threatening state security. Nonetheless, he was allowed to undergo medical treatment by doctors of his choice.

Nigeria

Second Chibok girl rescued?

On 19 May 2016, the Nigerian army said it has killed 37 terrorists and freed 97 women and girls from Boko Haram in the Sambisa Forest area (northern Borno State). Among those liberated was a second girl from Chibok, the military said. However, the chairperson of the Chibok parent representatives have casted a doubt on these claims. On 17 May, the first of 219 schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in the town of Chibok in April 2014 was rescued by a local vigilante group in the Sambisa Forest area.

Guinea Bissau

President dissolves government for the second time

On 12 May 2016, President José Mário Vaz dismissed Prime Minister Carlos Correia's government by decree. In August 2015, the President had already dismissed the first government formed by his own party under Prime Minister Pereira. While Pereira remained party leader, he has been hostile towards the President since. This situation has led to a deep division of the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde). In September 2015, both factions agreed to select veteran of independence Carlos Correia as Prime Minister. However, when he presented his government programme to parliament in December 2015, he was deprived of a majority, because 15 PAIGC members close to the President abstained from voting. The dissenters were excluded from both party and parliament and joined the opposition, trying to force their way into parliament again by taking legal action. Following this dispute, the parliament has practically remained unable to take any action since January 2016.

Mali

Five UN peacekeepers killed

Five soldiers from Chad have been killed in an attack on the UN peace mission in northern Mali. On 19 May, the UN reported that a convoy hit an improvised explosive device and then came under fire by an unknown group of armed assailants north of their Kidal base.

On 18 May, three soldiers were killed in an attack near the town of Aguelhok, bringing the number of UN soldiers killed by suspected Islamist extremists in the Sahara region of Kidal to 12 so far this year.

FYR Macedonia

Parliamentary elections postponed due to threatening boycott

The parliamentary elections scheduled for 5 June 2016 were postponed indefinitely, after opposition parties had threatened to boycott the polls saying that conditions for a free and fair election were lacking. Also the European Union had called for a postponement.

The elections were part of an EU-brokered accord designed to lead Macedonia out of the crisis which has been lasting since 2014. It had been triggered by accusations of the opposition against former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski who has resigned in the meantime. He was accused of having ordered the wire-tapping of more than 20,000 opposition members. After President Gjorge Ivanov granted an amnesty to more than 50 people allegedly involved in the wire-tapping scandal in April 2016, protests have been staged almost every day. Although the disputed elections were cancelled, demonstrations are continuing. The supporters of the so-called Multicolour Revolution demand Ivanov's resignation and a repeal of the amnesty. A solution to the conflict is not in sight (see also BN of 25 April and of 9 May 2016).

Armenia/Azerbaijan

Agreement on negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh

The two former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan are now seeking a peaceful solution to their dispute over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. This was announced by the two Presidents Serj Sargsyan and Ilham Aliyev during a meeting with mediators from Russia, the US and France held in Vienna on 16 May 2016. Both sides agreed to respect a new ceasefire and to start new negotiations in June in search of a comprehensive solution for the conflict.

Vietnam

Parliamentary elections

On 22 May 2016, parliamentary elections were held in Vietnam. In total, 870 candidates were running for the 500 seats in parliament, but only 11 were independent candidates not nominated by the communist party. The election results will be announced on 11 June 2016.

Prominent dissident released

On 20 May 2016, 70-year-old prominent dissident Nguyen Van Ly, a Roman Catholic priest, was released from prison ahead of time; officially, his sentence was due to end in August 2016. The co-founder of the opposition alliance 'Bloc 8406' had been sentenced to eight years in prison on charges of propaganda against the state in 2007. Already before, he had been jailed several times for a total of 14 years for his activities against the government. Observers consider his release a gesture of the Vietnamese government to US President Barack Obama who arrived for a three-day visit to Vietnam on 22 May 2016.