

Group 41 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

4 November 2013

Afghanistan

Security situation

On 28 October 2013, villagers in Andar district in Ghazni Province, Eastern Afghanistan, killed a suspected Taliban sympathiser who is thought to have been responsible for the death of 18 civilians in a roadside bomb (cf. BN of 28 October 2013). The suspect was beaten to death with sticks and stones, his body showed around 200 wounds.

182 Afghan local workers allowed to enter Germany

According to information provided by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, 182 persons who have worked for the Bundeswehr and the Federal Police have given the prospect of admission to Germany. They were able to provide evidence that they face, at the very least, a latent threat for having cooperated with the Bundeswehr. This pledge also applies to their families.

Pakistan

Leader of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan killed

Hakimullah Mehsud, the leader of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan was killed in a US drone strike on 1 November 2013. Four members of Mehsud's staff were also killed in the air drone strike on his vehicle. Pakistan's government has harshly criticised the action by the US and has summoned the US Ambassador. Minister of the Interior, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, said the attack was an attack on the peace process. The government led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was planning on sending a delegation of three highly-respected clerics to North Waziristan on 2 November 2013 to present the Taliban with a formal invitation to participate in peace talks. The objective of the negotiations is to put an end to terrorism above all in the semi-autonomous tribal areas in North-West Pakistan where around 40,000 civilians and around 4,000 soldiers have died in recent years.

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an umbrella organisation of around 30 militant groups operating from the Federally Administered Tribal Territories of North and South Waziristan, has not yet decided who will succeed Mehsud. One of the condendors is Khan Said "Sajna" Mehsud. Like Hakimullah Mehsud, he is a member of the Mehsud tribe in South Waziristan. He had led the TTP since it was founded in 2007.

Refugee movements in North Waziristan

Around 80,000 inhabitants of the area surrounding the city of Miranshah in North Waziristan have fled the region in fear of acts of revenge by the Taliban and imminent clashes between Islamist extremists and the Pakistani Army.

Iraq

Security situation

On 28 October 2013, at least 27 people were killed in suicide bombings in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Falluja and Mosul.

According to various reports, between ten and 50 persons were killed in suicide bombings in Iraq on 29 October 2013. At least 21 people were killed in Tarmiya alone, including members of the security forces and the militia. At least seven people were killed in a car bomb attack in front of a police compound near Mosul, in a district that has a large Turkmen population.

At least 32 people were killed in Mosul, Baghdad, Falluja and Tikrit on 30 October 2013.

On 31 October 2013, between 21 and 48 persons were killed according to various reports. Tuz Khurmato, Mosul Baquba and Muqdadiya were the worst-affected areas.

On 1 November 2013, eight people were reportedly killed in suicide bombings.

On 2 November 2013, 17 people were killed in suicide bombings.

On 3 November 2013, at least 14 people were killed in suicide bombings in Baghdad, Tal Afar, Baquba and Mosul.

According to Iraq Body Count, 1,095 civilians were killed in October 2013.

According to a count by the AFP news agency, 730 people were killed in the month of October.

UNAMI reports that at least 852 civilians were killed and at least 1,793 were wounded in October 2013. Baghdad was the worst-affected province with 411 people killed and 925 others injured, followed by Nineveh with 188 people killed and 294 wounded, Salahudin with 106 persons killed and 253 persons wounded and Anbar with 57 persons killed and 77 persons wounded.

Iraqi Prime Minister visits USA

Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and US President Barak Obama met in Washington on 1 November 2013. According to reports by the DPA news agency on 2 November 2013, al-Maliki asked the US for assistance in the fight against terrorism in Iraq. However, in a public statement issued after the meeting, Obama stopped short of announcing any new commitments of assistance.

Syria

Polio outbreak

An outbreak of the highly contagious disease poliomyelitis (polio) has been recorded in Deir al-Sor province in the North-East of Syria along the border with Iraq. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), ten out of 22 cases of suspected polio have been confirmed. The results of the remaining cases are not yet available. The disease was last reported in Syria in 1999. The WHO assumes that children were not vaccinated against polio because of the civil war.

Deputy-Prime Minister Jamil fired

The Deputy-Prime Minister Qadri Jamil who had been appointed in June 2012 was fired for acting without government permission when he travelled to Switzerland and met US officials last weekend. Jamil is said to have flown to Russia a few days before and to have met the former US ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, in Geneva on 26 October 2013. The two are said to have discussed the new international "Geneva 2" peace talks. He was considered to be a moderate force within the government and a candidate for an interim government.

Government willing to engage in peace talks under certain conditions

According to Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallim, the Syrian government will only participate in the forthcoming peace talks in Geneva if the Syrians themselves can decide on the future of their country.

Israel/Palestinian Autonomous Territories

Israel releases long-term Palestinian prisoners and announces it will build new settler homes

Israel released another 26 Palestinian prisoners serving lengthy prison sentences in the early hours of 30 October 2013 as announced (cf. BN of 28 October 2013) as a trust-building measure. However, a few hours later it announced that 1,500 new settler homes would be built for Jewish settlers in East Jerusalem.

Tunisia

State of emergency extended again

According to a report issued by the Tunisian news agency TAP, President Mohamed Moncef Marzouk announced that the emergency state is to be extended for eight months on the whole Tunisian territory until the end of June 2014. The decision is construed as a sign of rising tensions. The state of emergency has been in existence since Ben Ali was overthrown in January 2011 and has been extended by three months maximum each time since then.

Security situation

The security situation has deteriorated in recent weeks (cf. BN of 28 October 2013). On 30 October 2013, a suicide bomber launched an attack in front of a hotel in the coastal town of Sousse. Nobody but the suicide bomber was killed and nobody was wounded. Police officers managed to foil an attack in Monastir. The last terrorist attack to be carried out on a tourist centre was carried out in 2002. More than 20 people were killed in the bombing of a synagogue on the island of Jerba in April 2002.

Egypt

Demonstrations ahead of trial against Morsi

Hundreds of supporters of Egypt's ousted president Mohammed Morsi marched in street protests in and around Cairo ahead of his trial which begins on 4 November 2013. Seven persons were wounded and a dozen Islamists were arrested in clashes between supporters and opponents of Morsi in Alexandria. Morsi faces charges of inciting his supporters to murder his opponents during deadly clashes that took place in front of the presidential palace in December 2012. In December 2012, protestors marching in protest against a constitutional decree issued by Morsi granting himself the powers to issue any decision or law without any judicial review were battled with fists and rocks.

Somalia

Kenya's attacks against al-Shabaab

Two Commanders of al-Shabaab were killed in a drone strike on 28 October 2013. One of the Commanders killed, Ibrahim Ali Abdi alias Anta Anta, is thought to have masterminded a number of suicide attacks. The two men were reportedly en route from Jilib to Baraawe (Brava), an Islamist stronghold when their four-wheel drive was hit by a missile. According to a spokesperson from the Kenyan Army, it was a Kenyan missile that was used in the attack.

On 31 October 2013, Kenyan aircraft pounded a training camp of al-Shabaab. At least 67 persons were reportedly killed in the attack. The spokesperson of the Kenyan army says there were around 300 al-Shabaab militants in the camp at the time. al-Shabaab denies any involvement in the attack.

Kenya deployed troops to Somalia in October 2011 owing to ongoing attacks by al-Shabaab on its territory. These troops subsequently came under the command of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Democratic Republic of Congo

Imminent defeat of M23 rebels

The M23 rebels lost the last remaining larger city under their control on 30 October 2013 when the government troops FARDC captured the border town of Bunagana without a struggle. Bunagana had also been the main base of the M23 leaders. The militants of the rebel organisation withdrew into the Congolese hilltops close to the triangle of land where the borders of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and Rwanda meet. After government troops advanced further, M23 President Bertrand Bisimwa declared a unilateral ceasefire on 3 November 2013. At the same time, he urged Uganda to monitor the end of hostilities. Uganda has been brokering the peace talks between the conflicting parties that began on 12 December 2012 and have so far failed to yield any results. Congo government spokesperson Lambert Mende said that the declaration

of a ceasefire by the M23 was not sufficient to end the fighting. Rather, he said the M23 should unequivocally declare an end to the rebellion and should hand over its militants to Kampala/Uganda for demobilisation.

Kosovo

Local elections blighted by violence

The local elections held on 3 November 2013, the first to be held since Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 including the North which has a largely Serb population, have been blighted by massive acts of violence. People were urged to boycott the elections and attacks were carried out in the run-up to the elections. On the evening the elections were held, Serbian extremists stormed polling stations, smashing ballot boxes and assaulting staff members. OSCE observers were also attacked. Voting was interrupted at 16 of the 33 polling stations in the northern part of the city of Mitrovica. This calls the validity of the entire election in the North into question. The Central Electoral Commission is unable to publish the preliminary results for the residential areas inhabited by the Serbian minority, as scheduled. Turnout in these areas was very low. The majority of members of the Serbian minority had boycotted the elections because they want to belong to Serbia not Kosovo.

Participation of Kosovo-Serbs in the elections was considered to be the most important commitment undertaken by Serbia in the deal brokered by the EU in April of this year (cf. BN of 22 April 2013; 21 May 2013 and 19 August 2013). Serbia had agreed to relinquish its de-facto control over North Kosovo and had urged Kosovo Serbs in recent weeks to vote.

Russian Federation

Security situation in North Caucasus

According to a report issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation on North Caucasus, over 3,500 rebels have been killed in North Caucasus and around 8,000 have been arrested in the past ten years. It has been established that Islamist forces are having a growing influence specifically on young men in the conflict-ridden region. The report says radical Islam is gaining more and more support particularly in Dagestan.

According to estimates by the online news portal "Caucasian Knot", 375 persons were killed and 343 were wounded in the first nine months of 2013 in connection with the armed conflict. Compared to 2012 when the death toll was 700 (including 404 rebels) and 525 people were wounded, it said it expected the number of casualties to decrease in 2013.

Anti-terrorism laws toughened ahead of Olympic Games in Sochi

Russia has toughened its anti-terrorism laws ahead of the Winter Olympics Games in Sochi. President Putin signed new security rules last weekend. Under the amended law, relatives of those committing acts of terrorism may be held financially liable for the damage under certain conditions. It also sets prison terms of up to 10 years for persons who have undergone training as militants.

China

Suspected attack on Tiananmen Square

On 28 October 2013, an SUV rammed through barricades in front of Tiananmen Square's gate tower in Beijing, plowing through crowds and bursting into flames in front of the entrance to the Emperor's Palace. Five people died, including three of the SUV's passengers. Meanwhile, the Chinese authorities think the attack was carried out by an Uygur militant group. According to official reports, the dead include a husband and wife and the man's mother, all Uygurs. A flag imprinted with "extremist slogans" was found among items in the SUV. Five suspects, all of whom are Uygurs, have been arrested in Beijing. They admitted they had been involved in the attack. Authorities announced on 1 November 2013 that they are blaming the terrorist organisation East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) for the attack.

Background:

If the incident was indeed a suicide attack, this would be the first terrorist act to be attributed to the Uyghurs in the capital of China, in an area that has strict security and is a landmark of Beijing. Since almost 200 people were killed when riots broke out between Uyghurs and Han-Chinese in Ürümqi in the Uyghur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang in July 2009, there has been an increase in the number of violent incidents which the authorities are blaming on Uyghur "terrorists". Uyghurs think this is being used as a pretext to justify repression against their ethnic group. Independent reporting from the region is not possible.