



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Attacks on civilians

On 16.06.21, two women and a child were reportedly shot dead, and eleven others wounded by unidentified individuals in Herat province. On 15.06.21, five members of a polio vaccination team were killed by unknown gunmen in a coordinated attack in different locations of Nangarhar province. In a press release dated 16.06.21, Amnesty International called on the Afghan government to make greater efforts to investigate the circumstances surrounding the killings of civilians in recent months and to bring to justice the perpetrators. Since January 2021, an increasing number of health workers, humanitarian aid workers, human rights activists and journalists have been killed.

Fights over districts

Apparently, the Taliban have captured at least 30 districts in the last two months. On 21.06.21, it was reported that the Taliban had captured Doshi district in Baghlan province. On 20.06.21, eight districts in Faryab province were reported to be in Taliban hands and fighting was reported in the outskirts of Maimana, the provincial capital. On 19.06.21, the Taliban reportedly captured Mardan District in Jawzjan Province and Khwaja Sabz Posh District in Faryab Province. On 16.06.21, the Afghan army was reported to have recaptured Dawlat Abad district in Faryab province. On 15.06.21, it was reported that the Taliban had captured four more districts: Anar Dara in Farah, Khas Uruzgan in Uruzgan, as well as Gosfandi and Sayyad in Sar-e Pul. In Sar-e Pul province in particular, the Taliban appear to be controlling a large number of districts now. On 14.06.21, the Afghan army reportedly recaptured the districts of Khan Abad in Kunduz and Chah Ab in Takhar.

COVID-19 pandemic: peak expected in the next few weeks

On 21.06.21, it was reported that about 100 people were now dying from COVID-19 every day. On 16.06.21, the Afghan health minister stated that the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country was expected in the next two to four weeks and called on the population to comply with the rules. The majority of Afghans doubt the existence of the virus and neither wear masks nor keep their distance. It is assumed that the official figures only cover a fraction of the actual infections, as only up to 3,000 people are tested in the country every day. Only 1.6 percent of the population have received a first vaccine dose.

Algeria

Parliamentary election results announced - losses for ruling party

After the elections for a new parliament held on 12.06.21 (cf. BN of 14.06.21), the electoral commission has now informed that the new parliament's largest party is still the National Liberation Front (FLN), having however lost

more than 50 seats and securing 105 of 407 mandates. The Democratic National Assembly (RND), which is traditionally linked to the FLN, won 57 seats. The third strongest political power (64 MPs) are the moderate Islamists (MSP), who had hoped to win the election. The bloc of independent candidates achieved a comparatively good result with 78 mandates. The voter turnout of 23 percent represents a historic low.

Armenia

Prime Minister Pashinyan wins parliamentary elections

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's party surprisingly won the early parliamentary elections held on 20.06.21. After all ballots were counted, the 46-year-old PM and his Civic Contract party secured 53.92 percent of the votes; the turnout was around 50 percent. In the last parliamentary election held in December 2018, Pashinyan and his electoral alliance My Step had gained 70.4 percent of the vote. Pashinyan's main challenger, former President Robert Kocharyan and his Bloc Armenia, secured 21.04 percent which was significantly less than expected. Kocharyan and other opposition members complained of electoral fraud and irregularities in the election process. The parliamentary elections were observed by experts from the OSCE, who plan to give their opinion on the process later on 21.06.21. Twenty-one parties and four blocs ran in the elections, more than ever before. Most of them fell short of the number of votes needed to enter parliament. The threshold for parties was five percent and for party alliances (blocs) seven percent. The electoral commission stated that the party alliance of former President Serzh Sargsyan (other spelling: Serge Sargsyan) and the former head of the secret service, Artur Vanetsyan, came third and will also be represented in parliament.

Background

Pashinyan had called the new election under pressure from opposition protests. Some sections of society and several parties held the prime minister himself responsible for the defeat, the loss of territory and the many deaths in the armed conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflict had begun on 27.09.20 and ended on 09.11.20 with Armenia's defeat when a ceasefire agreement was agreed under Russian mediation. Pashinyan had always refused to resign after the war, stressing that he wanted to lead the country out of the crisis.

Benin

Report: Benin may be next to see threat from violent extremist organisations

In a joint report produced together with the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), the Dutch think tank Clingendael predicts a risk of Islamist violence spilling over from the Sahel into the north of the West African coastal states. Groups such as Islamic State of the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen (JNIM/Katiba Macina) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) might spread by forging local alliances and exploiting existing local conflicts for their goals. Using Benin as an example, the report describes conflicts in the departments of Alibori, Atacora and Borgou in the north of the country, such as disputes between herders and farmers over resources, related disputes over land ownership and conflicts over the W and Pendjari national parks.

Burkina Faso

Military operation after attack

On 14.06.21 the military informed that about ten members of Islamist groups were killed during operations conducted around Solhan (Sahel region) between 07.06.21 and 13.06.21, following the attack of 04.06.21 to 05.06.21 (cf. BN of 14.06.21). In addition, equipment was seized and an IED was defused.

Political dialogue

From 17.06.21 to 19.06.21, government and the opposition representatives met for negotiations in the capital Ouagadougou. The main topics were the security situation and local elections planned for May 2022. It was decided to continue the dialogue on 03.07.21.

Central African Republic

Fire in refugee camp

The situation of the 8,500 displaced people who had to flee a refugee camp near the town of Bambari (in the centre of the country) remains precarious after a fire had completely destroyed the camp, including a station of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in early June 2021. There is a lack of water, food, and shelter. The UN agencies UNICEF, UNHCR and OCHA are present on the spot. A media report cites the official version of the fire saying that the refugees set the camp on fire themselves when they left it to prevent others from taking over. Apparently, the fire was preceded by an attack by rebels on the army. In pursuit of the rebels, the soldiers also arrested people in the camp which caused the escape. Media reports speak of an internal UN document mentioning a forced displacement of the inhabitants. An MSF representative spoke in the same vein. In a report to the UN Security Council on 16.06.21, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres criticised the security forces and their allies for acts of violence, which were also directed against the UN blue helmet mission MINUSCA.

China

Hong Kong: raid and arrests at pro-democracy newspaper

On 17.06.21, five executives were arrested in a large-scale raid on the headquarters of the pro-democracy Hong Kong newspaper Apple Daily which is openly critical of Beijing. Cheung Kim-hung (publishing director), Ryan Law (editor-in-chief), Chan Pui-man (associate editor), Royston Chow (head of operations) and Nick Cheung (platform director Apple Daily Digital) are accused of colluding with foreign forces in violation of Article 29 of the national security law. The reason given was the publication of articles calling for sanctions against Hong Kong and China. Some of the articles had been published in 2019, before the security law came into force. The founder of the newspaper, Jimmy Lai, is already being held in custody (cf. BN of 31.05.21).

Colombia

Attack on military base leaves several people injured

On 15.06.21, a total of 36 people were injured when a car bomb exploded at a military base in the Colombian border town of Cúcuta. The defence ministry said that two people drove to the base in an SUV loaded with explosives after posing as officials. Two heavy explosions occurred within a few minutes. The government has stated that the attack was conducted either by the guerrilla organisation ELN or by a FARC splinter group. So far, no rebel group has claimed responsibility for the attack. The base of the 30th Brigade in Cúcuta is an important military base in the north-east of the country. From there, operations are coordinated against armed groups active in the border region between Colombia and Venezuela. The region is known as one of the most important coca-growing areas, where there are frequent violent conflicts over territorial and drug-trafficking control.

Côte d'Ivoire

Return of former President Gbagbo

After the International Criminal Court (ICC) had finally acquitted Laurent Gbagbo (cf. BN of 12.04.21), the former president returned to the country on 17.06.21. His last stay was in Belgium. Following the confirmation of the acquittal, President Ouattara, Gbagbo's opponent in the 2010 presidential election and the ensuing conflict claiming over 3,000 lives, had declared that Gbagbo would be allowed to return to the West African country as part of the national reconciliation process. However, the German Africa Foundation reports that it is so far unclear as to what extent Gbagbo will have to serve a 20-year prison sentence which had been imposed in Gbagbo's absence by the supreme court in Abidjan. Victims of the 2011 violence are demanding justice for the crimes committed at the time. Thousands of supporters of him and his party, the Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), awaited his arrival at the airport and on the streets of Abidjan. Clashes broke out with police who used tear gas to disperse the crowds.

Egypt

Court of cassation confirms death sentences

On 14.06.21, the supreme court of appeal upheld the death sentences of twelve people, among them senior members of the Muslim Brotherhood. In September 2018 they had been convicted along with more than 700 others for, among other things, killing police officers, possessing firearms and ammunition, and occupying and destroying public property in connection with the occupation of Rabaa al-Adwaiya Square in July and August 2013.

Ethiopia

Parliamentary elections

Ethiopia held national and regional parliamentary elections on 21.06.21. In these elections, originally scheduled for August 2020 and postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Abiy faced the voters' decision for the first time. He had been appointed prime minister after the surprise resignation of his predecessor Hailemariam Desalegn following ethnic protests in April 2018.

However, voting does not take place in all regions. In 64 of 547 constituencies, elections have been postponed to September 2021 due to logistical problems; and in the regional state of Tigray no date has been set yet for the vote. In addition, the two largest ethnic Oromo opposition groups, i.e. the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), among others, are boycotting the ballot because they are hindered in their work or because leading members are in prison. According to official figures, more than 37 million out of a total of about 50 million eligible voters have registered to cast their ballot. The first preliminary results are expected to be presented in five days.

Abiy has received international praise and the Nobel Peace Prize for democratic reforms and for ending two decades of conflict with Eritrea. He is currently facing international criticism because of the armed clashes in Tigray and allegations of serious human rights violations. Ethnic violence with numerous deaths, looting and expulsions is also taking place in other parts of the country, especially in the border region between Oromia and Amhara, Ethiopia's two most populous regional states. In the Benishangul-Gumuz region, fighting over land and resources has resulted in hundreds of deaths since last year.

A total of 46 parties are standing for election, with Abiy's Prosperity Party having the best chances of winning, not least because the opposition is fragmented into smaller, mostly ethnic parties. Only the Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (Ezema) of Bsyerhanu Nega and the Balderas for True Democracy of Eskinder Nega, who is in jail on charges of terrorist crimes but has been cleared as a candidate by the Supreme Court, are considered to have a chance of winning several seats in the federal parliament. No international observers will be present at the election. The EU has withdrawn its election observation mission, citing a 'lack of agreement on important parameters'. For example, the commission was guaranteed neither unrestricted freedom of movement nor free use of communication systems.

Ghana

Court date for LGBTQI activists postponed

The Ho District Court (Volta Region) has postponed to 14.07.21 the date originally scheduled for 16.06.21 in the case against 21 LGBTQI activists (cf. BN of 14.06.21).

Guinea

Government declares end to Ebola outbreak

At an event with the WHO held on 19.06.21, health minister Remy Laham declared the end of the current outbreak of the Ebola virus disease (cf. BN of 15.02.21). The south-eastern region of Nzérékoré was particularly affected. According to the WHO, twelve people have died of Ebola in the outbreak, out of a total of 23 confirmed or

suspected infections. Since February 2021, the WHO has been involved in vaccinating around 11,000 people at particular risk. The WHO Regional Director for Africa, Matshidiso Moeti, said that lessons have been learned from the 2014–2016 Ebola epidemic.

Iran

Conservative hardliner wins presidential election: reform camp weakened

The head of the judiciary, Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi ol-Sadati (Ebrahim Raisi for short), was officially elected president with 63 percent of the votes cast. While radical-conservative representatives regard this a 'purification' of the revolution, Iranian commentators abroad see the reform movement at an end now. Iranian observers see Raisi's appointment as president merely as an intermediate step on the way to succeeding the 81-year-old revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khamenei. Raisi is considered a hardline cleric. The new president is controversial because back in 1988, he had been a member of the 'death committee' which was responsible for mass executions of political prisoners; later, he was responsible for numerous death sentences in his capacity as head of the judiciary. Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) are therefore calling for an independent investigation into Raisi's role in human rights abuses. In the run-up to the vote, tensions arose over the Guardian Council's controversial decision to admit only seven candidates. Neither former president Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad nor former parliamentary speaker Ali Larijani were admitted to register for the run-up. Given that Raisi's competitors were considered to have no profile and no chance of winning, the result of the ballot was actually determined by the vote of the Guardian Council. Critics have accused both the Guardian Council and the revolutionary leader of turning the election into an appointment and eliminating the few democratic elements of the political system. Three of the approved candidates had withdrawn from the race for the presidency before the deadline. During the pre-election phase, the candidates had been instructed not to speak on issues such as foreign and social policy, censorship, and the nuclear programme. In addition, media professionals were obstructed, and critical reporting was suppressed. According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 42 media workers had been summoned to court or threatened by the secret service before the polls. Parallel to the presidential election, elections were also held for the council of experts, local elections, and the mid-terms for some of the parliamentary seats. Voter turnout was officially 48 percent, which is a historic low. In Tehran, the turnout was only 26 percent. A broad civil society movement had called for a boycott of the ballot on 18.06.21. With slogans like 'No to the Islamic Republic', 'There is no vote at all' and 'I don't vote', activists had promoted the boycott on social media and also in public speeches on streets, squares and in parks.

Iraq

Attacks on US facilities

On 16.06.21, two drones loaded with explosives were shot down by security forces in Baghdad. It is unclear which side had used them. On 20.06.21, a Katyusha missile went down without exploding near the Ain al-Assad airbase which is used by the USA.

Protests

Demonstrations and protest rallies have been continuing in several cities. Special attention was given to the protest of the mother of slain activist Ihab al-Wazni, Samira al-Wazni, who held a sit-in in front of the court in Karbala 40 days after the murder of her son, demanding an investigation into the case. Solidarity rallies took place in Najaf and other places. Samira al-Wazni has accused the well-known militia leader Qassem Mahmoud Karim Musleh to have murdered her son. He had been briefly arrested in May 2021 but was released shortly afterwards.

Jordan

Former lawmaker arrested

On 16.06.21, the Jordan News Agency reported the arrest of former member of parliament Osama al-Ajarmeh who had previously been expelled from the House of Representatives by parliament. He is accused of sparking riots in

southwest Amman, where the Ajarmeh tribe enjoys considerable influence. Now he has been apparently arrested after a video circulated of him publicly insulting the king with a sword in his hand and a gun. As yet, there is no information on the official reasons for his arrest.

Lebanon

Economic crisis

The economic crisis has worsened in recent weeks; and still no government has been formed. Fuel import is almost impossible due to the lack of foreign currency. The shortage is leading to even more frequent power cuts and difficulties in obtaining fuel for cars etc. Every day sees long queues at petrol stations that are still open, with fuel prices having tripled meanwhile. Many students cannot attend school because their parents do not have the money for fuel or the school bus. On 17.06.21, energy minister Raymond Ghajar announced that the gasoline subsidy from which the country was benefiting would soon come to an end.

The medical care sector is also affected by the crisis. Pharmaceuticals and other medical supplies are in short supply. Hospital staff is only able to perform emergency treatment.

On 17.06.21, a donor conference agreed to give financial support to the Lebanese army in view of the imminent inability to pay the soldiers' salaries in five months' time.

With a nationwide general strike, workers and employees protested on 17.06.21 against the severe economic crisis and the failure to form a government. Shops, government offices, companies and banks were closed, several roadblocks were set up and car tyres were set on fire. Protesters also blocked the highway to the airport with garbage bins set on fire.

Libya

Dbaiha declares coastal road reopened

On 21.06.21, with a ceremony in the western Libyan city of Buwairat al-Hassun, the Prime Minister of the new transitional government (GNU), Abdulhamid Dbaiba, declared reopened the section of the coastal roads between Misrata and Sirte, which had been closed since 2019 due to the civil war. However, the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF; formerly Libyan National Army, LNA), who dominate the east, have denied the opening of the 300 km section. A front line still runs through Sirte province, whose coastal city of the same name is under LAAF control.

Mali

Leading jihadist arrested

The French military has informed that on 11.06.21, a high-ranking member of the terrorist group État Islamique dans le Grand Sahara (EIGS), Dadi Ould Chouaib (also known as Abou Dardar), was arrested during a military operation by French soldiers in the border region between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Abou Dardar had been arrested by the Malian authorities in 2014. However, he was released with around 200 jihadists as part of an exchange for four hostages in October 2020. Abou Dardar is suspected of being involved in the attack launched on 02.05.21 on a market in Tin Hama in northern Mali, in which three people were maimed.

Myanmar

Ceasefire in Kayah, fighting in Sagaing, Magway and Kayin, explosions in Yangon

After weeks of fighting in Kayah State that forced over 100,000 people to flee, the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) informed on 15.06.21 that an agreement was reached on a temporary ceasefire with the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw). The KNDF is an alliance of armed civil resistance groups and ethnic armed groups from across Kayah. Because they were not included in the negotiations, parts of the KNDF have meanwhile distanced themselves from the outcome.

In Tabayin Township (Sagaing Region), local resistance fighters and the Tatmadaw clashed on 14.06.21, apparently triggered by the murders of three relatives of two village leaders. One resistance fighter and two Tatmadaw soldiers were killed in the fighting. The Tatmadaw also raided twelve villages, causing many people to flee.

Near Kin Ma village (Magway region), civilian resistance fighters stated to have ambushed 15 Tatmadaw soldiers on 15.06.21. Subsequently, the Tatmadaw burned the village almost to the ground. More than 1,000 residents fled, an elderly couple died in the flames.

In Myawaddy (Kayin State), 25 men were found dead after being captured on 31.05.21 by members of the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) along with 22 others, including women and children. According to the military, those killed were civilians. KNDO spokesperson Saw Wah Nay Nu, however, stated that the victims were spies for the military. The KNDO is an armed group under the Karen National Union (KNU). On 31.05.21 there were heavy clashes between the KNDO and the Tatmadaw that lasted for several days.

On 18.06.21, six bombs exploded in Yangon (Rangoon), targeting the headquarters of the pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and other buildings. Two people were killed and five injured in the incident.

Since the military coup of 01.02.21, at least 872 people have died as a result of police and military violence. 6,219 people have been arrested for political reasons, 5,033 of whom are currently still in detention.

COVID-19 pandemic: new outbreaks in Yangon, Bago and Sagaing

From 13.06.21 to 15.06.21, there were several major coronavirus outbreaks. On 20.06.21, the highest number of new infections within 24 hours was registered since the coup, totalling 546 (including 255 infections in the Sagaing region). The military regime responded with local lockdowns and school closures. The health ministry stated that the virus variants Alpha, Delta and Kappa, which have so far been detected in the regions of Sagaing, Mandalay, Tanintharyi and Yangon, are partly responsible for the latest outbreaks.

Nigeria

Boko Haram confirms death of Abu Bakar Shekau

Bakura Modu (alternatively: Bakura Sahalaba), a leading cleric within the radical Islamist terrorist organisation Boko Haram confirmed the death of the terrorist organisation's long-time leader Abubakar Shekau in a video leaked to AFP news agency on 16.06.21. Media report that in the video Bakura, in a speech delivered in Arabic, blamed the leader of the rival and ISIS-affiliated Islamist terrorist group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), Abu Musab Al-Barnawi, for killing Shekau and vowed revenge for the act. The alleged new Boko Haram leader Bakura also signalled preparedness to negotiate with ISIS. Some days earlier, an individual claiming to be Al-Barnawi (ISWAP) reportedly stated that the Boko Haram leader was dead.

Shekau apparently blew himself up or shot himself dead after fighting with ISWAP around 18.05.21 (reports differ on the date and details of the incident, cf. BN of 31.05.21).

Students and teachers abducted in the north-west

Media report that several students and teachers were abducted by armed bandits in an attack on Birnin Yauri College in the north-western state of Kebbi on 17.06.21. The numbers given on the kidnapped ranged from 30 to over 80 students and three to five faculty members. Apparently, one police officer and one kidnap victim were killed in the attack on the college. It was further reported that five students and two teachers were freed the day after the attack. On the evening of 20.06.21, all the other victims were reportedly freed by government troops, but this has not yet been officially confirmed.

Since December 2020, more than 700 children and students are said to have been kidnapped in the north of the country in order to extort ransom money. Media reported that on 03.06.21, a total of 88 people were killed in attacks on several villages in Kebbi State (cf. BN of 14.06.21).

The numerous deadly attacks in the north-west are a major reason for the increasing criticism of President Muhammadu Buhari.

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Jerusalem: flag march

On 15.06.21, the postponed parade to celebrate 'Jerusalem Day' took place in Jerusalem. The march had originally been planned for 10.05.21 but was first diverted due to increased tensions and finally cancelled (cf. BN of 17.05.21). Nevertheless, it is considered to be one of the triggers for the eleven-day war between Hamas in Gaza and Israel which claimed numerous lives (cf. BN of 31.05.21).

The parade was deviated from its traditional route and was led around the majority Palestinian neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. In spite of this, the participants gathered at the Damascus Gate. Numerous ultra-nationalists participated in the march, waving Israeli flags and yelling 'Death to the Arabs!' and 'May your villages burn!' at one point in the parade. Government and party representatives distanced themselves from the slogans. Ahead of the parade, there were some clashes between the Israeli military and Palestinians. There were also isolated attacks on Orthodox Jews by Palestinians.

Gaza Strip: Israeli airstrikes

In protest against the flag march staged on 15.06.21, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip sent burning balloons across the border into Israel for several days in a row, causing at least ten fires. In response, the new Israeli government ordered several airstrikes against Hamas positions on 16.06.21 and 17.06.21. There were no reports of people injured.

West Bank: protests against settlement construction claims one life

On the evening of 16.06.21, the Israeli military shot and killed a 16-year-old boy during protests against an unauthorised settlement near Beita, south of Nablus. The boy had allegedly thrown an explosive object towards the soldiers. He is the fourth individual killed since the settlement construction started over a month ago, leading to protests against the construction activities (cf. BN of 31.05.21 and 14.06.21). Media have reported that the Nahala settlers' movement has been pushing ahead with the construction of the Evyatar settlement for several weeks now. According to the residents of the neighbouring villages, the land was historically privately owned by Palestinians. In the 1980s, however, private land had been confiscated by Israel for military purposes in order to build a military base, which was dismantled in the 1990s. Since then, Palestinians have reportedly been denied access to the land. The Israeli military justifies this decision with security concerns. In 2013, 2016 and 2018, attempts were made to settle the land, but the settlers were always evacuated, the reports say. A new evacuation order was apparently issued on 14.06.21, giving the settlers one week to leave the buildings.

West Bank: Palestinian woman killed after attack

On 16.06.21, a Palestinian woman died after she allegedly attacked Israeli soldiers with her car and then tried to continue the attack with a knife. The military stated that it was planned to stop her by gunfire. Her family has denied the allegations against her.

East Jerusalem: protests at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound

On 18.06.21, hundreds of Palestinians protested after Friday prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound against the parade of 15.06.21 and against insults to the Islamic prophet Muhammad chanted by participants in the parade. Unlike during the May 2021 protests, the military did not storm the area this time, but stayed behind the perimeter and security points. Three Palestinians were injured in the protests.

Saudi Arabia

Execution for participation in insurrection

On 15.06.21, a young man was executed for having participated in uprisings in 2011 and 2012. Human rights organisations say that it is not clear whether he was of age when he participated in the riots. According to official statements, he was 19 years old at the time of the crime. This is the 26th execution this year, compared to a total of 27 in the whole of 2020.

Senegal

Military operation in Casamance

The Senegalese army reported on 14.06.21 that it had captured several rebel posts and camps of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) around Badème and along the border with Guinea-Bissau, between the towns of Baggame and Bouniak. A commander stated that two army personnel were left wounded in the offensive. The military operation, launched two weeks earlier, aims to strengthen border control with Guinea-Bissau in the south. The intention is to secure the Casamance area and to enable the inhabitants to return safely to the land from which they were displaced by the conflict. Apart from resettling the inhabitants, the military operation is also intended to put an end to rebel attacks against locals and stop the current drug and timber trafficking, the Senegalese authorities stated.

Somalia

Attack on military training camp in Mogadishu

On 15.06.21, a suicide attack targeted a checkpoint outside the 'General Degaban' military training camp in Mogadishu, for which al-Shabaab claimed responsibility. The targets were recruits who had gathered outside the compound. Officials say at least ten recruits were killed and at least 20 others injured. Other sources report a total of at least 15 dead.

South Sudan

Fighting in Lakes State leaves several people dead

Media have reported a new clash between members of the Alou and the Manyangreel, leaving 18 people killed and 22 wounded. The fighting was triggered by a dispute over grazing land. Police attempts failed to prevent the fighting in advance by increasing their presence along the connecting roads and in the villages, as well as by switching off the mobile phone network in the region. Citing a police spokesperson, reports say that the two groups had previously engaged in fighting over grazing land. The police spokesperson further noted that police are reluctant to intervene in these situations and tend not to get involved in such conflicts. Otherwise, the previously fighting groups were likely to turn united against the police. Moreover, the people involved in such fights were better equipped than the security forces, the spokesperson said.

Sudan

Peace negotiations between government and SPLM-N suspended

Media report that the peace talks between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), which had first been planned in March 2021 in a declaration of principles, have been suspended again for the time being. The talks, which began on 26.05.21, focus in particular on the unification of the armed forces of the parties involved and the establishment of a democratic and secular state that will uphold religious freedom. The negotiators emphasized towards media representatives that agreement was reached on some points and that only few issues remained to be discussed. However, agreement could not be reached on the aspects of a secular state and religious freedom. The current talks are important because the SPLM-N has not signed the peace treaty of October 2020 but has now re-entered negotiations.

It was also reported that members of the Kawahla and the Dar Ali clashed again from 10.06.21 and 15.06.21 in Kordofan State. A total of seven people were killed, three injured and several houses set on fire. The Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation (HUDO) reported that neither police nor military forces intervened in the fights. Earlier, there had been heavy clashes in the South Kordofan region, resulting in the deaths of several people and the declaration of a state of emergency.

Sudan / South Sudan

Talks on disputed border

Media report that on 13.06.21, Sudan and South Sudan resumed talks on the disputed borderline demarcation between the two states. The Joint Border Commission, which was formed for this purpose, reported a basic exchange of views on the border and following positive talks. Apparently, the negotiators have described the talks as 'fruitful' and expressed confidence that the work of the commission might soon lead to a result.

Syria

Idlib: No agreement yet on extended border opening for relief supplies

After the first meeting between US President Biden and his Russian counterpart Putin on 16.06.21, a spokesperson for the US administration stated that Putin was reluctant to secure a commitment as to whether Russia would use its veto in the UN Security Council. The vote on an extension of cross-border aid to Syria is expected taken on 10.07.21.

In 2014, the UN Security Council had approved aid deliveries by the UN and other non-governmental relief organisations to a total of four border crossings in areas controlled by opposition forces in Syria. In 2020, three of these crossings were closed to international aid deliveries after Russia and China vetoed an extension. In the same year, food prices in Syria rose by about 200 percent, the UN World Food Programme stated, with more than 60 percent of the population affected by food insecurity and hunger, which is double the number of 2018.

Bab al-Hawa, the last border crossing still open for international aid, is located in Idlib governorate and borders Turkey. More than half of the people in Idlib are said to be dependent on food from the international aid convoys. Both the Syrian and Russian governments want aid deliveries to be distributed centrally via Damascus.

Tajikistan

Prison sentence for posts on Facebook

On 14.06.21, the Shokhmansur district court in Dushanbe sentenced lawyer Abdulmajid Rizoiev to five and a half years imprisonment for 'publicly calling for extremist activities' (Art. 307.1 of the Tajik Criminal Code). Rizoiev was accused of publishing 'hidden calls for extremism' on his Facebook page, such as, in particular, a citation critical of the government and a post claiming that 75 percent of the people had he interviewed following the parliamentary elections of March 2020 had stated not to have voted in the elections. The human rights organisation Front Line Defenders said that the conviction is also related to Rizoiev's work as a legal representative for people evicted from their homes as part of an urban renewal project. Rizoiev's lawyers have announced to appeal the verdict.

Turkey

Attack on HDP party office

On 17.06.21 a gunman stormed a local HDP party office in the western Turkish city of Izmir and shot dead a 20-year-old female party worker. Turkish media report that the gunman had previously tried to set the building on fire. HDP co-chair Mithat Sancar told reporters that a planned meeting of 40 party officials at the office had been cancelled shortly before the attack. The Izmir governor's office has informed that the perpetrator is already in custody. During his interrogation at the police station, he apparently stated that he had carried out the attack out of hatred against the PKK. In an official statement, the HDP held the AKP/MHP government responsible for the act, having publicly associated the HDP with the PKK and thus provoked attacks against the HDP.

Suspected Gülen supporters arrested

On 18.06.21, at least seven suspected Gülen supporters were arrested on a boat near the coast off Ayvalik in Balıkesir province. Among them were five former police officers. They allegedly tried to cross to the island of Lesbos in order to escape to Greece.

Suspected ISIS supporters arrested

On 18.06.21, more than 40 suspected ISIS supporters were arrested during an anti-terror operation in twelve provinces. They are accused of providing financial support to the network. The public prosecutor's office in Ankara had issued 61 arrest warrants; further suspects are being sought.

Yemen

Death penalty carried out in Sanaa

It is reported that on 15.06.21, three men were executed in public by a firing squad in the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa. Hundreds of people gathered to watch the execution of the men, who had been convicted of rape and murder. This was apparently the first public execution since August 2018.

COVID-19 vaccines to Socotra

The UAE reportedly sent 60,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses to Socotra Island on 17.06.21. The vaccine is to be distributed free of charge. The island is controlled by the Southern Transitional Council, which is supported by the UAE.

Fighting in Marib

On 18.06.21, the Houthis intensified their offensive to take over the government-controlled city of Marib, resulting in high casualties for both the rebel group and Yemeni government forces. On 20.06.21, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition carried out airstrikes in support of the government. The Houthis have been stepping up their offensive to take over the area since February 2021.

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Briefing Notes
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