



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

5 July 2021

Afghanistan

Attacks on civilians / internally displaced persons

On 03.07.21, the Afghan Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and several international NGOs called on the UN to send a fact-finding mission to the country to investigate deadly attacks on civilians since the beginning of 2020. Reports of 01.07.21 say that the month of June 2021 was the deadliest month with the highest number of military and civilian casualties in Afghanistan in 20 years. On the government side, there were 638 dead and 1,060 injured (including civilians), and 6,000 Taliban were killed. The most affected areas were provinces in the north and centre of the country. On 30.06.21, it was reported that 100 civilians, including women and children, were killed or injured in Baghlan province as a result of fighting between the Taliban and government forces. Apparently, the Taliban entrenched themselves in residential houses during the fighting around the provincial capital of Pul-e Khumri. Reports of 26.06.21 say that 5,000 families have fled their homes during fights around the provincial capital of Kunduz. In Badghis province, 600 families have reportedly left their homes due to drought and food insecurity. On 29.06.21, four civilians were injured by a bomb explosion in Jalalabad/Nangarhar. A day earlier, a civilian was killed, and four others were injured by a bomb in Jalalabad. The victims were employees of a charity organisation.

Withdrawal of the international troops

Reports of 30.06.21 say that the last German troop contingents have left the country after 20 years, together with Polish, Georgian and North Macedonian troops. Italian troops have also vacated their base in Herat and transferred control of the airport in Herat to the Afghan government. Most of the European troops (Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, and the Netherlands) have meanwhile left the country and the American troops reportedly also plan to complete their withdrawal by the end of August. On 02.07.21, Bagram airport was handed over to the Afghan army. 650 US troops are to remain in the country after the withdrawal, and more troops are to protect Kabul airport until it is taken over by the Turkish government. Since the withdrawal of the troops, the situation in the country has escalated; US General Miller said that civil war was a path that can be visualised.

Combat operations / infrastructure

On 05.07.21, about 1,000 Afghan soldiers reportedly fled to Tajikistan to escape the Taliban. The Long War Journal noted that on 05.07.21, the Taliban were in control of 185 districts, the government of 77 districts and 136 districts were contested. Many districts have reportedly been captured by the Taliban without resistance from the Afghan army. The Afghan interior ministry informed on 02.07.21 that investigations were underway, and that the army had partly withdrawn voluntarily in order to avoid civilian casualties. On the same day, hundreds of Afghan army troops were deployed to secure the border town of Hairatan in the heavily contested Balkh province. On 30.06.21 new fighting was reported between the security forces and the Taliban outside the capital Kabul. On 29.06.21, the citizen militias that are springing up all over the country were reported to be officially under the control of the Afghan army and would be further trained and deployed to fight the Taliban. According to reports of 30.06.21, the Afghan

army has meanwhile recaptured several districts from the Taliban. Millions of citizens in Kabul have been left without electricity for days because electricity pylons have been blown up. A total of 13 pylons have been destroyed in the last two weeks. According to other reports, 36 pylons have been destroyed in the last six months. The Taliban have denied involvement in the attacks.

Taliban families live in Pakistan

On 29.06.21, the Pakistani interior minister admitted that families of Afghan Taliban fighters were living in Rawat, Loi Ber, Bara Kahuh and Tarnol in Pakistan. The bodies of fighters were also be brought to Pakistan, and the Taliban were coming to the country for medical treatment, the minister stated. The Pakistani government had always denied that the Afghan Taliban had retreats in Pakistan. On 02.07.21, senior Pakistani generals said that action against the Afghan Taliban in Pakistan might have dangerous consequences for Pakistan.

Algeria

New Prime Minister appointed

On 30.06.21, President Tebboune appointed former finance minister Aïmene Benabderrahmane as the country's new Prime Minister. He is tasked to continue consultations with political parties and civil society in order to form a new government after the parliamentary elections of 12.06.21 (cf. BN of 14.06.21 and 21.06.21).

Opposition politician imprisoned

The coordinator of the Democratic and Social Movement Fethi Gheras was arrested at his residence on 30.06.21 and charged the next day. He is accused of attacking the president and disseminating information that could harm the national interest as well as national unity and public order. Gheras had voiced criticism of Algeria's political leadership in a Facebook post on 27.06.21, insinuating that the interests of the people were being ignored.

Detainees released

Media report that 18 detainees were released on the occasion of Algerian Independence Day, with further releases to follow. Apparently, most of the detainees were young activists who had been arrested in connection with their participation in protest rallies. In Algeria, prisoners are traditionally pardoned on the eve of the anniversary of the declaration of independence on 5 July.

Bangladesh

COVID-19 pandemic: lockdown due to rising infection numbers

Instead of a 14-day lockdown as initially proposed by the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) for COVID-19, a strict lockdown entered into force in the country on 01.07.21, initially for one week (cf. BN of 28.06.21). Freedom of movement is severely restricted and public life has been largely shut down. Media report that security forces (including police and military) are monitoring compliance with the corona measures. Infection figures are still rising, with the delta variant spreading. According to official figures, over 940,000 people have been infected with the virus, and more than 15,000 people have died in connection with the COVID disease (as of 05.07.21).

Burkina Faso

Demonstrations

After the attack in Solhan from 04.06.21 to 05.06.21 with numerous fatalities (cf. BN of 07.06.21), there is growing discontent about the security situation and the government measures against jihadist violence, which are perceived as insufficient. Thousands rallied in several cities, including the capital Ouagadougou, on 03.07.21 and 04.07.21. The opposition had announced on 25.06.21 to suspend participation in the political dialogue with the government that had begun on 17.06.21 (cf. BN of 21.06.21) and called for protest rallies instead. Several thousand people had already taken to the streets on 26.06.21 in Kaya (Centre-North region) and Titao (North region), and at least several hundred had protested on 12.06.21 in Dori (Sahel region).

DR Congo

Lawmaker detained for allegedly criticising the President

A media report says that on 27.06.21, Jean-Bosco Assamba, a lawmaker belonging to President Félix Tshisekedi's ruling coalition Union Sacrée, was arrested on criminal charges of contempt of the head of state in Bunia, capital of eastern Ituri province. He was formally charged by the temporary military justice and detained at Bunia central prison. According to his lawyer, Assamba had temporarily lost his parliamentary immunity due to the extension of the state of siege. His lawyer further stated that the MP is accused of having called the President a liar in a video released two months ago, saying that the President had not kept his promises regarding the province of Ituri gripped by militia violence. There is no further information on this issue.

Mob justice due to alleged connection to the rebel group ADF

On 02.07.21, the independent information radio Okapi cited an anonymous source reporting on acts of lynching in Komanda, a commercial centre in the Irumi area of Ituri province. During a protest rally staged by local people against the Islamic rebel group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), who operates in the Irumi area and has been repeatedly responsible for deadly attacks there, an angry mob killed ten local residents (among them four women and a minor) on suspicion of links to the ADF, the source said. Radio Okapi reports that those killed were all members of a local ethnic community. The intervention of multinational troops from the UN Mission for Stabilisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) prevented a further bloodbath. Security circles say that investigations have been initiated into the incident and the alleged perpetrators will face criminal proceedings.

Maï-Maï militias: violence, inter-factional fighting, wave of displacement

According to a media report of 24.06.21, members of the Maï-Maï militia Front des patriotes pour la paix, Armée du peuple (FPP/AP) abducted approximately 25 people in the Batangi chiefdom of the Lubero territory of North Kivu province. Subsequently residents who refused the forced labour imposed by the militia were tortured. Several media report that negotiations were held on 26.06.21 on the modalities of the surrender and the participation of 800 FPP/AP militia members in the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programme (DD&R). The government, MONUSCO, civil society representatives and the militia leader Kabido of the Maï-Maï grouping FPP/AP participated in the negotiations.

After the declaration of a state of siege in eastern Congo, Kabido has apparently signalled the FPP/AP's willingness to lay down arms. Hundreds of fighters in Lubero territory had already laid down their arms in the last two years, but in the meantime, they have again sought to join the militia and resumed fighting due to persistently poor living conditions.

Meanwhile, media report that fighting between the FPP/AP and the Maï-Maï militia Nduma défense du Congo (NDC) Rénové of militia leader Guidon in the Lubero territory of North Kivu province on 30.06.21 has led to new waves of displacement in the region, as has fighting between rival Maï-Maï militias of the Nakuja faction in Maneima province, which dates back several weeks. Preliminary figures given on 24.06.21 say that a total of 1,712 displaced households have found refuge in the Kongola area of Tanganyika province due to the inter-factional fighting in Maneima province. The displaced reportedly face poor humanitarian conditions at the place of refuge.

Egypt

COVID-19 vaccination campaign: most vulnerable groups not sufficiently prioritised

In an article, the international human rights organisation Amnesty International (AI) has criticised the government's COVID-19 vaccination campaign as arbitrary and flawed for not prioritising the most vulnerable groups of people. According to AI, residents of informal settlements and remote rural areas, prisoners, refugees, and migrants have very limited access to COVID-19 vaccinations.

Law on relations with terrorist organisations

On 28.06.21, the Egyptian parliament approved a bill which facilitates the dismissal of government employees with links to a terrorist organisation such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been banned in Egypt in December

2013. This legislation would apply to employees of government agencies, ministries, local councils, public organisations, and public sector companies.

Ethiopia

Ethiopian government declares unilateral ceasefire in Tigray

Media report that on 28.06.21, Ethiopia announced a unilateral ceasefire in the Tigray region to apply immediately and to last until the end of the harvest season. The aim is to allow farmers to cultivate their fields and humanitarian organisations to work freely in Tigray. Apparently, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) has largely regained control in Tigray after Ethiopian and Eritrean troops left the capital Mekelle and other parts of the region. Meanwhile, the UN and the World Food Programme (WFP) have called for safe passage for humanitarian workers to enter the Tigray region, stating that easily accessible routes were blocked, for example by the destruction of important bridges. On 02.07.21, the WFP emergency coordinator also reported that fighting was still going on in some 'hot zones', which is why 35 WFP staff were trapped. As a result, WFP suspended its work for 48 hours and later resumed activities in the northwest. According to the UN, the situation in Tigray has deteriorated massively over the past two weeks. An estimated 400,000 people are directly affected by famine. Another 1.8 million people are on the brink of famine.

After initial scepticism, the TPLF announced on 04.07.21 that a ceasefire was possible in principle if certain conditions were met. The TPLF demanded the complete withdrawal of all Ethiopian troops and their allies from the Tigray region, and an assurance that no further military action would be taken against the region and its inhabitants. In addition, the TPLF demanded the reinstatement of the previous Tigray government with all previous rights and obligations, and that Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Issaias Aferworki be held accountable for the damage caused. The TPLF also called for a UN investigation into the crimes committed in the conflict.

Gambia

Tensions ahead of presidential elections

Gambian media report growing concern about tensions in the voter registration process ahead of the presidential elections officially scheduled for 04.12.21. On 03.07.21, several Gambian media reported violent attacks by suspected supporters of former President Yahya Jammeh on a voter registration patrol of the currently largest opposition party, the United Democratic Party (UDP), in Kanilai, Jammeh's former political stronghold and home town. The inspector general of the Gambia police has announced the launch of a police investigation. The UDP party is facing significant criticism for the nationwide deployment of unofficial voter registration patrols, who target and harass eligible voters and deny them the right to vote over allegations of holding third-country citizenship or dual citizenship, as several media report. On 03.07.21, President Barrow reportedly condemned the activities of the UDP voter registration patrol, accusing the UDP of division, tribalism and causing instability in the country.

Lack of enforcement of child protection laws

The Gambian news portal Foroyaa reports that in a press release dated 17.06.21, the independent National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), established under the UN Paris Principles, pointed out that the child protection provisions contained in the Children's Act 2005, the Women's Act 2010, the Tourism Offences Act 2003 and the Trafficking in Persons Act 2007, among others, were not being effectively enforced. Despite national legislation, children are still subjected to sexual exploitation, various forms of labour exploitation (child begging and child labour), trafficking and various forms of sexual violence, among others, Foroyaa says. In addition, practices such as genital circumcision and child marriage continue to take place.

Ghana

Deaths in protests over murder of activist

On 29.06.21, police shot dead two people in Ejura-Sekyeredumase (Ashanti Region) in a crackdown on protests against the killing of activist Ibrahim Mohammed; several people were injured in the incident. On 25.06.21, the activist, also known as (Macho) Kaaka, had been attacked and seriously injured by unidentified individuals in Ejura-Sekyeredumase. On 28.06.21, he succumbed to his injuries. Kaaka was a member of the social and political protest movement #FixTheCountry that has emerged on social media and gives space especially to younger people to voice criticism on what they see as unsatisfactory social and economic conditions in Ghana. The police have informed that two people were arrested in connection with the murder of the activist.

Honduras

IACHR commits Honduras to better protection for LGBTQIs

On 28.06.21, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) held Honduras responsible for the death of transgender woman Vicky Hernández and demanded that reparations be paid to her family. The death of the woman, who had been shot by security forces in 2009, has never been fully investigated. In addition, Honduras was ordered to prosecute hate crimes against LGBTQI people more vigorously in the future, protect this group better and grant them more extensive rights. According to the local NGO Las Cattrachas, about 300 LGBTQI people have been killed in Honduras since 2009.

India

Kashmir: Sikh rally over alleged forced conversion

On 27.06.21, hundreds of Sikhs held a rally in Srinagar over the alleged forced conversion of two women of Sikh faith to Islam in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Media report that the women had voluntarily converted to Islam after marriage. The families of the two women, however, have alleged forced conversion. In the Muslim-majority Indian part of Kashmir, Sikhs make up about two per cent of the population, where they have largely lived peacefully with Muslims in rural areas in the north and south of the region.

Iran

COVID-19 pandemic: Sistan Baluchistan new hotspot

Due to the spread of the delta variant, Iran is at the brink of the fifth corona wave. The health ministry has informed that on 03.07.21 the situation was declared to be very critical for 92 districts and cities in the country. The poorest province of the country, Sistan Baluchistan, is particularly affected by the spread of the virus, with many people becoming infected while fetching water outside their houses and flats, Iranian foreign media say. The situation is aggravated by poor health infrastructure and regular power cuts. Many infected people try to seek medical treatment in neighbouring Pakistan. However, the border between the two countries was reportedly closed to the movement of people and goods on 30.06.21. In the border town of Zahedan, the authorities reportedly closed more than 220 shops. Overland traffic in the province has been restricted. The neighbouring provinces of Kerman and Hormuzgan as well as the cities of Tehran and Isfahan are apparently also affected by the new corona wave. The national image campaign is making slow progress due to a lack of vaccines. So far, only two percent of the population have received a vaccine dose. Against this background, vaccination tourism from Iran to Armenia is reportedly growing.

New head of the judiciary appointed

Shiite cleric Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei has been appointed to succeed Ebrahim Raisi as head of the judiciary. Raisi will take office as the new president in mid-August 2021. Like his predecessor, the new head of the judiciary is a graduate of the Haqqani Madrasa in Qom in the 1970s. After the 1979 revolution, Ejei had been presiding judge in several controversial court cases, including against former Tehran mayor Karbaschi in 1997. Also, he had served

as the clergy's prosecutor. He then briefly served as Intelligence minister during Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad's first term as president (2004-2009). Ejei has been on US and EU sanctions lists for years for human rights violations. His appointment is a signal of the growing influence of the security services on Iran's judicial apparatus.

Demonstrator sentenced to death

Media report that on 29.06.21, a 32-year-old man was sentenced to death on charges of moharebeh (war against God) for destroying public property in protest against the regime. His lawyer has told an Iranian news agency that seven other prisoners were sentenced to prison terms of four to seven years for taking part in demonstrations. All eight people had been arrested in early 2020 following nationwide protests in November 2019.

Growing pressure to migrate

Citing Bahram Salavati, head of the Iranian migration observatory, Iranian foreign media report a growing pressure to migrate across all social classes. The most recent surveys show that in the wake of the Corona crisis, labour and educational migration from the country has declined sharply, whereas the number of those who want to reach Europe illegally and apply for asylum there has increased sharply, the reports say. This is an indicator that the gap between the desire to leave and the decision to leave is closing, as more and more people are making their way to Europe. Push factors are the diminishing hope for a better future and a lack of economic and social participation, especially among the younger generation. On the side of the European countries, numerous pull factors are encouraging migration against the backdrop of the economic crisis in Iran. The migration observatory predicts increasing educational migration in the post-Corona period.

Iraq

Attacks on power lines

On 04.07.21, the chief of staff of the Iraqi high command informed that within the last week, at least 44 overhead power lines had been targeted by terrorists, all of them in the areas disputed between the Iraqi central government and the Kurdish Regional Administration. The Islamic State, which is increasingly exploiting the power vacuum in these regions to regain strength, was named as the culprit.

Elsewhere, other attacks have occurred, most notably another explosion in the Maridi market in Baghdad in a socially deprived area belonging to Sadr City.

Protests

In several cities, demonstrations and rallies have been continuing, mainly in protest against the massive power cuts, the longest of which on 02.07.21 affected several provinces in southern and central Iraq for hours, but also in protest against the generally tense economic and social situation. The power cuts are particularly severe during the current heat wave, when temperatures in many cities reach more than 50 degrees Celsius during the day. Water supply is often dependent on the availability of electricity.

Exchange of fire between PKK and Komala

During the weekend of 03. 04.07.21, members of the PKK clashed with the Iranian Komala in Erbil province; both groups use the very sparsely populated mountainous region bordering Turkey and Iran as a retreat area.

Kazakhstan

Political activist sentenced to prison term

On 21.06.21, the district court No. 2 of the Saryarka district of Nur-Sultan city handed down the sentence of 18 months' imprisonment for activist Asqar Kayirbek. He was accused of organisation and participation in the activities of the Kōşe Partiyası movement, which has been classified as extremist and banned by the Kazakh judiciary. In a resolution of 11.02.21, however, the European Parliament had described the organisation as a 'peaceful opposition movement' and spoke of an abuse of extremism laws with regard to previous convictions of supporters of the organisation. The Kazakh service of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty has stated that this is the

first judgement of this kind. In the past, people facing similar charges had only been sentenced to restrictions on their liberty.

Lebanon

Economic crisis

Since 01.07.21, the Lebanese army has been offering overflights over Lebanon in combat helicopters for USD 150 in cash. The measure is an attempt to obtain foreign currency which is urgently needed to provide for army personnel and their families. Since 2019, the purchasing power of an average soldier's pay has fallen to around USD 70 a month, and army leaders have repeatedly asked for international help in the past to keep the army functional. France has meanwhile supplied the army with material resources such as food parcels and spare parts, but not with money.

The reduction of subsidies on petrol and other oil derivatives has caused an additional increase in petrol prices by more than 30 percent. As the country's power supply is dilapidated, many Lebanese rely on privately generated electricity using diesel generators. The Lebanese pharmaceutical association has stated that the stocks of several hundred medicines needed to treat chronic high blood pressure, diabetes and other diseases have been exhausted, and further medicines will be withdrawn from the market in the next few weeks due to a lack of foreign currency to buy them on the world market. A World Bank report published on 30.06.21 concluded that Lebanon's current crisis is one of the ten most severe in the last 150 years, with only Chile's great depression in 1926 and the collapse of the Spanish economy after the Civil War being considered more devastating.

Libya

Fighting between militias claims at least eight lives

From 10.06.21 to 12.06.21, two militias from Zawiya and Ajaylat engaged in violent clashes in the western Libyan town of Ajaylat. Shops were looted, people were kidnapped, and property was destroyed; at least eight people were killed, among them an unknown number of civilians. The Presidential Council called for an immediate end to the fighting. After the formation of a transitional government (GNU) and the Presidential Council in March 2021, a comprehensive reform of the Libyan security sector is still pending, as is the disarmament of the numerous militias in the country.

Clashes between two tribes in Benghazi

On 26.06.21, at least five people were killed in clashes between two families of different tribes in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi. Local media report that the dispute broke out between families of the al-Jawazi and al-Awaqeer tribes.

Mali

Soldiers killed in attack

On 04.07.21, suspected jihadists attacked a patrol near the town of Léré (central Mali) close to the border with Mauritania. Four Malian soldiers were reportedly killed. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Military cooperation between France and Mali to be continued

On 02.07.21, the French defence ministry informed that the joint operations with the Malian military would be resumed, which had been suspended a month ago. After the second coup in Mali in May 2021, France had suspended all joint military operations with Malian forces at the beginning of June 2021 (cf. BN of 07.06.21).

Mexico

Gender-based violence and femicides increase in 2021

According to official figures presented on 28.06.21 by the secretariat for security and citizen protection (Secretaría de Seguridad y Protección Ciudadana) on gender-based violence in Mexico, 423 women were murdered because of their gender in the time period January-May 2021. This represents a 7.1 percent increase in numbers compared to the same period last year. More than half of the murders were committed in just eight Mexican states. Rapes have even increased by about 30 percent compared to the first five months of 2020, reaching 8,623 cases by the end of May 2021. The above figures only represent the officially registered cases; a large number of the offences are not reported in Mexico, so the number of undocumented cases is high.

Montenegro

Prosecution calls for political support for war crimes proceedings

A recent media report says that on 30.06.21, Montenegrin special prosecutor Lidija Vukcevic accused the country's authorities of lacking political will in prosecuting war crimes and called for more political and public support for investigation procedures. She stated that also the EU Commission, in its 2020 Progress Report, demanded that the prosecution of such war crimes be given high priority, and criticised that charges of command responsibility, co-perpetration and aiding and abetting had not been brought so far. It was the task of the special prosecutor's office to bring to justice Montenegrin citizens who committed war crimes on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo during the wars of the 1990s, the EU report was cited. Since Montenegro's independence in 2006, only eight such trials have taken place, according to the report, in which only lower-level perpetrators have been brought to justice. So far, there has been only one case with a final conviction in 2019, sentencing a defendant to 14 years of imprisonment for the murder of civilians.

Morocco

COVID 19 pandemic

Since 30.06.21, the number of new infections has been rising again in Morocco. On 30.06.21, a total of 776 new infections were reported in 24 hours, 327 of them in the Casablanca-Setat region. On 01.07.21, a total of 789 new infections were reported in 24 hours. On 04.07.21, the Moroccan health ministry reported 951 new infections in 24 hours, adding up to 2.6 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants. So far, 10,064,283 people are reported to have been vaccinated once and 9,161,960 people have received the second vaccination dose.

Myanmar

Mass amnesty, at least 25 dead in Sagaing, fighting in Chin and Shan

On 30.06.21, the junta released 2,296 people from prison who had been jailed for participating in protest rallies and charged with sedition. The justification given was that those released had not been involved in acts of violence and had not taken on leading roles. Among them were 14 journalists who had covered the protests. Meanwhile, protest rallies are continuing against the coup, as are demands for the release of ousted de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi. On 02.07.21, security forces killed at least 25 people, among them members of the local vigilante group and civilians, in Tabayin Municipality (Depayin; Sagaing region). Using makeshift weapons, the vigilantes had opposed some 150 soldiers deployed to six villages, whereupon the regime forces opened fire with artillery shells. Thousands of people fled the area. On 03.07.21, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) reported a total of 890 people killed by the military since the coup on 01.02.21. This number does not yet include the victims from Tabayin.

On 29.06.21, the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) clashed heavily with the Chinland Defense Force (CDF) and the Chin National Defense Force (CNDF) rebel groups in Hakha and Falam (Chin State). Fighting between the Tatmadaw and local resistance groups was also reported in Kale (Sagaing region). Resistance fighters report that dozens of Tatmadaw soldiers were killed in the clashes.

On 28.06.21, two men were shot dead during protests against the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) in Namhkam in northern Shan State. The protests had been sparked by the death of the Tai Youth Organisation's (TYO) vice-chairman in SSPP custody and were also directed against forced recruitment by the SSPP. The SSPP is fighting for more autonomy in the south of Shan State, while the rival ethnic group Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), which supports the TYO, is pursuing the same goals in the north of the state. Since 01.06.21, a territorial dispute between the SSPP and RCSS has displaced about 1,660 people. According to eyewitnesses, the SSPP receives support from the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the largest armed ethnic organisation in Myanmar.

Niger

Boko Haram attacks in the southeast claim several lives

On the evening of 29.06.21, a total of 13 fighters of the radical Islamist group founded in neighbouring Nigeria were killed by soldiers of the Force Multinationale Mixte (FMM) in armed clashes in the south-eastern region of Diffa. The FMM (Multinational Joint Task Force, MNJTF) consists of armed forces from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Media report that the insurgents were killed when FMM forces repelled a Boko Haram ambush on the road between the eponymous capital of the Diffa region and the village of Mainé Soroa. Earlier, members of the radical Islamist organisation had intercepted a bus and killed four of the civilian passengers, reports say.

Already on 22.06.21, the Nigerien army had reportedly repelled a Boko Haram attack in the village of Bosso on the shores of Lake Chad in the south-east of the country, killing three members of the radical Islamist terrorist group. Apparently, no casualties were recorded on the side of the state forces. The attack took place only two days after 6,000 people had returned to the village of Baroua near Bosso. According to media reports, the residents had fled Baroua in 2015 due to jihadist attacks. Baroua and Bosso are located in the southeastern region of Diffa, where, according to the UN, about 300,000 refugees from neighbouring Nigeria have found shelter, as well as numerous internally displaced people. President Mohamed Bazoum has announced that he would meet with the governor of the neighbouring Nigerian state of Borno in the near future to negotiate the return of the Nigerian refugees.

Nigeria

Separatist leader arrested

The leader of the separatist movement Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu, has been extradited to Nigeria and was brought before a court in the capital Abuja by the Nigerian secret police on 29.06.21. The Nigerian attorney general Abubakar Malami has stated that Kanu was arrested on 27.06.21 with the assistance of Interpol. The details of the arrest and extradition are unclear. A spokesperson for the UK's diplomatic mission in Abuja said that Kanu, who also holds British citizenship, was not arrested in the UK and that the Nigerian government has been asked to clarify the circumstances of his arrest.

Kanu had been arrested in Nigeria in 2015 and charged with treason for calling for the secession of Biafra from Nigeria through the London-based Radio Biafra. He fled in 2017 while at large.

Media reports say that the armed wing of the IPOB movement, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), is accused of having killed at least 60 people, mostly police officers, in recent months. These incidents had been the subject of a tweet by President Muhammadu Buhari, who blocked Twitter in Nigeria after his short message had been deleted by the social media site (cf. BN of 07.06.21).

Yoruba independence movement rally in Lagos

On 03.07.21, supporters of the Yoruba independence movement rallied in the economic metropolis of Lagos. According to the Lagos state police, 49 participants of the rally were arrested at Gani Fawehinmi Freedom Park in Ojota district.

A police spokesperson has denied reports that a girl was fatally shot by one of the bullets fired by police forces during the rally. The Lagos state government has ordered an investigation into the case.

Pakistan

Two border guards killed

On 30.06.21, two Pakistani soldiers were killed by gunfire from Afghan territory at the Afghan border in North Waziristan (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa). Pakistani security forces blame the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), who are said to operate with allies in eastern Afghanistan. Afghanistan has denied the allegations.

Ahmadiyya Community: another community centre in Faisalabad desecrated

A press release by the Ahmadiyya Community has informed that on 24.06.21, another of their mosques in Faisalabad (Punjab) was desecrated by the local administration, accompanied by the police, after sunset. The incident is similar to the desecration carried out on 17.06.21 (see BN of 28.06.21). This has been the eighth occurrence of this kind in 2021.

Palestinian Autonomous Territories/Israel

Court upholds demolition permit for family home after fatal attack by family father

On 23.06.21 Israel's supreme court upheld the decision to demolish the house of the Shalaby family in the West Bank. On 02.05.21, the father of the family had carried out an attack on several Israelis, in which one of the victims died (cf. BN of 10.05.21). His wife had filed an objection against the planned demolition of the house, which was now rejected.

The Israeli authorities use the demolition of the homes of Palestinians who commit attacks against Israelis in some cases as a punitive measure and hence as a means of deterrence. Human rights organisations have denounced this practice as collective punishment.

West Bank: critic of Palestinian Authority dies in custody

On 24.06.21, a Palestinian activist and critic of the Palestinian Authority (PA) was violently arrested in his home by a group of masked men, as was reported by his family. Shortly afterwards, he was pronounced dead in a hospital in Hebron. According to official statements, the arrested man's condition deteriorated severely during the arrest by the Palestinian security authorities, and he was taken to a hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. The death triggered protests by hundreds of Palestinians in Ramallah that lasted for several days. The protesters demanded the resignation of President Abbas and his government; some of the rallies were violently dispersed. Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh has announced investigations into the incident. The Palestinian People's Party meanwhile decided to leave the Fatah-led government, resulting in the resignation of labour minister Nasri Abu Jaish on 28.06.21.

On 21.06.21, another activist had been arrested overnight by the Palestinian security authorities on charges of cybercrime after publicly criticising the PA on Facebook.

Gaza Strip: restrictions eased

The Israeli government has announced the lifting of some restrictions imposed on the Gaza Strip as of 25.06.21. These include the extension of the fishing zone from six to nine nautical miles, and the admission of raw material imports for essential civilian factories. Under the restrictions, the factory of a well-known beverage manufacturer had been forced to close shortly before, which meant the loss of 250 jobs in Gaza. The lifting of the restrictions is conditional on a stable ceasefire.

Gaza Strip: Israeli air strikes after incendiary balloons from Gaza

On 02.07.21 and 03.07.21, the Israeli military responded with air strikes against Hamas positions in Gaza to the launching of incendiary balloons in the Gaza border area, which caused damage on the Israeli side. The Israeli military has informed that a weapons factory and a Hamas rocket launcher were destroyed in the operation. Hamas has confirmed that the sites hit belonged to the group. One individual was seriously injured in the incident.

East Jerusalem: buildings in Silwan demolished

On 29.06.21, the demolition of houses began in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan on the orders of the Israeli authorities. A Palestinian-run business was knocked down after demolition notices were issued for at least

eight buildings. Jerusalem's deputy mayor Arie King said that about 20 buildings were affected by demolition orders. The houses had been built illegally without the necessary Israeli permits and were now to be removed to make way for an adventure park and public buildings, as they were located on historically and religiously significant land. The residents had been ordered to take care of the removal of their houses by 28.06.21. As this did not happen in many cases, the buildings would now be demolished by Israeli authorities, the mayor said.

The demolition triggered protests in which 13 people were injured, as Palestinian medics informed. Two Israeli police officers were reportedly also injured during the protests.

West Bank: Israeli agreement on unauthorised settlement

On 30.06.21 Israeli officials informed of an agreement between the Israeli government and settlers of the Evyatar settlement near Beita in the West Bank, which had been built illegally (cf. BN of 22.06.21). According to the agreement, the settlers will have to leave the settlement within a few days. However, the settlement will not be demolished for the time being, while an investigation is carried out as to whether the illegal settlement was built on private Palestinian property. If the results of the investigation show that the settlement was not built on private property, there is a possibility of obtaining official authorisation for the settlement, so that some settler families can return to the site, the officials stated. Palestinian families from nearby villages have made historical claims to the land in question, which has been inaccessible to the Palestinian population for decades. The Israeli military has justified the denial of access with security concerns.

West Bank: clash between Palestinians and Israeli military claim a life

On 03.07.21, a Palestinian was killed by Israeli fire during a clash with settlers in the village of Qusra near the city of Nablus. According to the Israeli military, the man had thrown an explosive device from a roof towards the soldiers who responded by firing at him.

Somalia

Timetable set for parliamentary and presidential elections

After several days of talks, the national consultative forum, comprising the Federal Government of Somalia, the five federal member states and the mayor of Mogadishu, announced on 29.06.21 that the postponed elections for the Upper House will be held on 25.07.21 and those for the Lower House between 10.08.21 and 10.09.21. Together, the two houses will elect the president on 10.10.21. The elections had been postponed several times because no agreement could be reached on the voting terms (cf. BN of 16.02.21). This had triggered a government crisis and violent clashes (cf. BN of 03.05.21).

Attack

On 02.07.21, it was officially reported that at least ten people were killed and dozens injured in a suicide attack near a café close to the 'Juba' hotel in Mogadishu. The area of the attack is home to several ministries, the headquarters of the intelligence service and other official buildings. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility, stating that security forces were targeted by the attack. There is no information on whether government officials were among the victims. According to al-Shabaab, at least 15 people were killed and 22 others injured in the blast.

Sudan

UNAMID mission ends its mandate

Media have reported on the end of the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which had been decided by the UN Security Council in Resolution 2559 at the end of 2020. The UN Assistant Secretary-General has stated that the final dissolution of the mission will take another year, with the withdrawal of all forces, including the handover of all sites and the disposal of remaining materials and equipment. Among other things, 14 sites are to be handed over, to be used by the Sudanese government for civilian purposes only, as well as 193 vehicles, 196 generators and UNAMID medical facilities in Zalingei, Nyala and Kabkabiya. The UN have reportedly also confirmed to remain active in the country after UNAMID through the United Nations Integrated Transition

Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and other missions. UNAMID's mandate had run for 13 years. Within this mission, over 100,000 military and police forces were deployed to Sudan.

NGOs denounce poor security situation

The South Sudan NGO Forum has issued a statement condemning the ongoing attacks on civilians and aid workers in South Sudan, calling for more measures to protect and ensure the safety of civilians and aid workers there. The Forum noted repeated outbreaks of violence in recent weeks on a local basis, severely affecting the population and the already poor humanitarian situation. The increase in violence has particularly affected Upper Nile, Jonglei, Greater Pibor Administrative Area and Central Equatoria states, with a rise in livestock-related incidents and ambushes along highways. According to the Forum, seven humanitarian and health workers have been confirmed killed this year while carrying out their work. Since the outbreak of the conflict in 2013, a total of 126 people working in the humanitarian sector have been killed, the Forum stated. The South Sudan NGO Forum is an association of currently 312 national and 114 international NGOs active in South Sudan.

Syria

Idlib: civilians killed by artillery and air force fire

On 03.07.21, at least eight people were killed in attacks by government forces, most of them children. A UNICEF spokesperson has called the incident the worst violence since the March 2020 ceasefire agreement. The shelling occurred again in the village of Ibleen in the south of Idlib governorate (cf. BN of 14.06.21).

Aid workers on the ground and the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights have reported the events unanimously: artillery fire from government areas was followed by air strikes by Russian warplanes. UNICEF counted a total of 512 children killed in Syria in 2020, most of them in the northwest. The region is currently home to 1.7 million children.

Idlib: human chain against border closure for humanitarian aid

On 02.07.21 a total of more than 2,000 humanitarian workers reportedly participated in a rally demonstrating against the imminent closure of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing from Turkey to Syria. Russia had announced to vote against the extension of UN cross-border aid at the upcoming UN Security Council meeting on 10.07.21 (cf. BN of 21.06.21).

North East: hundreds of children held in adult prisons

On 30.06.21, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) informed that several hundred children, most of them boys, had been distributed from the notorious al-Hol camp for ISIS members to prisons that serve as adult detention centres. Local authorities in north-eastern Syria, which is under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), have pointed out that many of the children were associated with ISIS fighters.

The ICRC is the only organisation that has regular access to prisons throughout Syria. Last year, the organisation was able to visit a total of 36 detention centres in Syria.

Tajikistan

COVID 19 pandemic: mandatory vaccination imposed

Media report that in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Tajikistan became the first country in the world to impose vaccinations on all citizens over 18 years of age with immediate effect on 03.07.21. Vaccination is free of charge. There is no information on which, if any, sanctions will be imposed in case of non-compliance with the order. According to the Tajik authorities, about 13,600 people have been infected with COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic, 93 of whom have died. Independent experts assume significantly higher numbers.

Turkey

LGBTQI Pride march in Istanbul

On 26.06.21, during the Pride march in Istanbul, about 50 people were arrested for participating in an unauthorised rally and resisting the police. The police used violence against demonstrators and tear gas to break up the rally. Prior to the march, the authorities had banned the rally and set up roadblocks on the ground that the march violated a ban on protests that offend public morals. LGBTQI pride events have been banned in Istanbul for the past seven years due to alleged threats to public safety. During the event, an Agence France Presse photographer, Bulent Kilic, was arrested but released in the evening. Images shared on social media of police officers pushing Kilic to the ground and kneeling on him led to widespread criticism in the media and further protests against violence against journalists in Istanbul and Ankara on 29.06.21.

Clash between suspected trafficker and police

On 28.06.21, a shootout occurred in the south-eastern province of Siirt between Turkish gendarmes and the driver of a truck carrying 84 refugees from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The driver apparently opened fire after being ordered by the gendarmerie to stop the truck. In the ensuing gunfight, two refugees were killed, and ten others injured. The driver of the truck tried to escape but was caught and arrested on the spot.

Suspected Gülen supporters arrested

Between 28.06.21 and 03.07.21, at least 146 people accused of having links to the Gülen movement were arrested in raids carried out across the country. The so-called 'payphone investigations' are based on call recordings. The prosecution assumes that a member of the Gülen movement used the same payphone to call all his contacts one after the other. Based on this assumption, when an alleged member of the movement is found in the call records, it is assumed that other numbers called immediately before or after that call also belong to people with Gülen links. Among those arrested are active-duty soldiers, military trainees, and government employees.

Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention

On 29.06.21, Turkey's supreme administrative court rejected by a vote of three to two an appeal seeking the reversal of a presidential decree on the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention as of 01.07.21. The court based its decision on Article 104 of the Constitution stipulating that the president has the power to ratify and cancel international agreements. On 01.07.21, protest rallies against the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention were staged in various cities across the country. Police cracked down on the demonstrators, using roadblocks. Several organisations stated that femicides were widespread in Turkey and that women would be at even greater risk of violence after Turkey's withdrawal from the Convention.

Use of child soldiers

On 01.07.21, the United States added Turkey to the list of countries that are implicated in the use of child soldiers over the past year. This was the first time a NATO member state was placed on such a list. According to the Trafficking in Persons Report of 2021, Turkey supports the Sultan Murad Division in Syria, a branch of the Syrian opposition which, according to information from the US State Department, recruits and uses child soldiers. Turkey has denied these allegations.

Court decision in the MIT truck case

On 03.07.21, the supreme court of cassation upheld the sentence against 18 military personnel who, contrary to an order, had stopped trucks of the Turkish intelligence agency MIT at the Syrian border in 2014. The defendants were charged with an attempt to overthrow the government through the use of force or to prevent the government from carrying out its duties. The court's verdict implied that the defendants had links to the Gülen movement and that the act was carried out on the movement's orders. The act was described as the first step in the 2016 coup attempt. The defendants received prison sentences ranging from 18 to 26 years.

Court decision in the Gergerlioglu case

On 01.07.21, the constitutional court ruled in the case of deposed HDP MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioglu that his rights had been violated by his detention on terrorism charges. Media report that with this decision, the court cleared the

way for his release and the restoration of his parliamentary status. Gergerlioglu had been stripped of his parliamentary status in March 2021; after a two-and-a-half-year sentence against him for spreading terrorist propaganda became final, he was imprisoned in April. The charges were related to a link he had shared on Twitter to a news story that included comments by the PKK. The constitutional court ruled that Gergerlioglu's right to be elected and to engage in political activity had been violated, as had been his right to personal freedom and security.

Uzbekistan

Restriction of access to several social networks

On 02.07.21, Uzbekistan's telecommunications regulator O'zkomnazorat restricted access to several social media platforms for the time being on the grounds that the providers were violating the law on personal data, which had been amended in April 2021. When processing and storing personal data of Uzbek nationals, internet companies are now obliged to operate the respective servers within Uzbekistan. According to media reports, the services of Twitter, TikTok, Skype and the Russian platform VKontakte are currently affected by disruptions such as faulty or delayed loading processes.

Already in March 2021, freedom of expression in the digital space had been further restricted by the introduction of new online criminal offences (cf. BN of 03.05.21).

Venezuela

Three human rights defenders arrested in Falcón state

On 02.07.21, three human rights activists were arrested in Venezuela on charges of treason, sedition, and terrorism: the director of the Fundaredes Foundation, Javier Tarazona, his brother Jose Rafael Tarazona and Omar de Dios Garcia. Human rights activist Jhonny Romero was also initially arrested, but he was released a short time later. The Fundaredes Foundation documents the activities of former Colombian guerrilla groups in the border area and their conflicts with the Venezuelan armed forces. On 29.06.21, the three human rights activists had denounced links between members of the government and members of the guerrilla groups at a press conference in Caracas. According to the foundation, Tarazona and his colleagues had already been observed and threatened by members of the secret service Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional (SEBIN) in the time between the press conference and their arrest. According to the media, they notified the attorney general's office in the state of Falcón of this fact on 02.07.21. Subsequently, they were reportedly arrested on the basis of the above accusations; on 03.07.21, they were brought to court and charged.

Vietnam

Journalist arrested

Media report that between 30.06.21 and 01.07.21, an independent journalist was arrested who was wanted nationwide after a failed arrest attempt in May 2021. The arrest was made under Article 117 of the penal code (dissemination of anti-state information). Apparently, he had reported on corruption, land rights disputes and other issues deemed politically sensitive by the government.

Yemen

Three dead in Houthi attacks in Marib

A government official has informed that on 29.06.21, at least three people were killed by two missiles in a Houthi airstrike in the town of Marib. Another ten people were injured, among them two children. According to unconfirmed information from the Houthi side, the targets of the attacks were military camps in the town.

Houthi attack on targets in Abyan

Several government officials have stated that on 04.07.21, the Houthis carried out a rocket attack on a military base in Abyan in the south of the country, killing at least two soldiers and injuring more than 20 others. Attacks by the Houthis, who control most of the northern part of the country, are less frequent in the south, where the internationally recognised government and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) are struggling for control.

Aid payments from the World Bank

On 30.06.21, the World Bank announced payments of USD 150 million to its Yemen Emergency Human Capital Project (YEHCP). The payments are intended to provide basic food supplies, as well as access to water and sanitation for more than 3.65 million Yemenis. Around 80 percent of the Yemeni population is dependent on humanitarian aid to ensure their survival.

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