



# Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

22 November 2021

## Afghanistan

### **Economy, currency**

It was reported on 15.11.21 that the value of the afghani is increasingly dropping against the US dollar and is at its lowest level for two decades. As a consequence, food and petrol prices are rising. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) fears a total collapse of the Afghan financial system.

### **Education**

Education minister Munir has stated that girls have a right to education, also announcing that an Islamic syllabus is to be introduced for all schools in the future. Analysts are attributing the absence of any concrete guidelines to differences of opinion within the Taliban, however. According to the education minister, the Taliban reject UNICEF's plan to bypass the government and pay teaching staff directly (cf. BN of 08.11.21), insisting on their right to monitor payments.

### **Violence against civilians / hostilities with ISKP**

It was reported on 17.11.21 that the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) had carried out two bomb attacks on minivans in the west of Kabul in which at least two people died. The victims were allegedly Shiite Hazaras. A similar attack on Hazaras occurred last week (cf. BN of 15.11.21). UNAMA head Deborah Lyons said on 16.11.21 that the ISKP was now increasingly active not only in the east, but throughout the entire country.

### **Humanitarian situation**

According to reports in the media on 12.11.21, the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) has stated that US\$ 230 million dollars is required per month in order to provide half of the required meals for starving people. The Afghan health ministry reported on 16.11.21 that one million children and 700,000 women in the country are malnourished. It was reported on the same day that the EU is setting up a centre for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan in the city of Termez/Uzbekistan. On 17.11.21 the head of UNAMA, Deborah Lyons, spoke before the UN Security Council about the poor humanitarian situation and cooperation with the Taliban government. She said the general security situation had improved, notwithstanding reports of houses being searched and extra-judicial killings. UNAMA is allowed access to all areas of the country (including such which were previously inaccessible) and female aides are also approved. She went on to explain that almost one in two Afghans (out of a total population of around 38 million) are confronted with a food insecurity crisis or emergency. With the onset of winter and the very limited food supplies used up, it is feared that 23 million Afghans will face food insecurity crises or emergencies. While the risk of famine used to apply primarily in rural areas, people in towns and cities are now also affected. She stated that the UN had provided humanitarian aid for 10.5 million people in the third quarter of 2021. 36 tonnes of humanitarian aid from the Russian government arrived in Kabul on 18.11.21. In all, 108 tonnes are to be delivered. A train carrying 1,000 tonnes of relief supplies from China is expected in Mazar-e Sharif in twelve days.

## Armenia / Azerbaijan

### Renewed fighting in the border region of Nagorno-Karabakh

Fierce fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan took place in the disputed border region of Nagorno-Karabakh from 15.11. to 17.11.21. At least eight soldiers were killed on both sides. Many soldiers were injured and a number were taken prisoner. According to the Armenian defence ministry, Azerbaijan soldiers opened fire on the Armenian border posts in the north-east of the country, which subsequently returned fire. For its part, Azerbaijan has accused Armenia of shelling a number of villages in Azerbaijan territory. Although a ceasefire is in place, armed clashes continue to occur between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the border area around Nagorno-Karabakh. The course of the border, which is disputed at many points, is a source of recurring tension. Following mediation by Russia, the situation in the border region has calmed again for the time being.

## Burkina Faso

### Attack: updated casualty figures

Initial reports stated that at least 19 security personnel and one civilian died in an attack by unknown assailants on a gendarmerie unit providing security for the Inata gold mine (Sahel region) (cf. BN of 15.11.21). The death toll has since risen to at least 49 security personnel and four civilians. Several members of the gendarmerie are missing. This makes the attack one of the most serious in recent years.

### Demonstrations due to security situation

In the face of continuing violence, discontent is growing among the population and the pressure on the government of president Roch Marc Christian Kaboré is rising. In response to a call from the movement Sauvons le Burkina Faso (Save Burkina Faso), several hundred people demonstrated against the government in the capital, Ouagadougou, on 16.11.21. There were demonstrations in other towns and cities as well.

### Demonstration against military convoy

A demonstration took place in Kaya (Centre-Nord region) on 20.11.21 against a French military convoy passing through the city on its way from Côte d'Ivoire to Niger. Protesters had been preventing the convoy from passing through Kaya since 18.11.21. French security personnel fired warning shots in response to violent actions by some demonstrators. Several people were injured by gunfire. It is unclear who was responsible for firing these shots. Some reports in the media state that the French military fired the shots, while other sources point out that Burkinan security forces also fired weapons and used tear gas. Protesters had also attempted to stop the convoy in other places on the days prior to this incident. There are voices among the Burkinan population that accuse the French military, which is active in the Sahel region in connection with Operation Barkhane, of not doing enough to combat extremist groups, or even of supporting them.

## Burundi

### Sanctions lifted

On 16.11.21 the USA lifted the sanctions on Burundi which had been in effect since November 2015. The USA declared a state of emergency for Burundi by executive order on 22.11.15 in the face of the prevailing political crisis, in connection with which Burundian security forces and high-ranking government officials were accused of serious human rights violations. Among the sanctions imposed, the property and assets of a number of government officials were frozen and visa restrictions were ordered. Following the election of president Ndayishimiye in 2020 a number of reforms were initiated in Burundi, covering a spectrum which included combating human trafficking, improving the country's economy and fighting corruption. As a result of the ensuing new circumstances and positive developments, US president Joe Biden has now lifted the sanctions. In taking this step, the USA also expressly recognised the completed change of government in Burundi while stressing that it would continue to apply pressure to the Burundian government. Vital aspects such as independent media, the fight against corruption, human rights violations and abuse remain in the USA's sights. The EU also imposed sanctions against the country in 2015. The EU and Burundi are currently involved in talks on the lifting of these sanctions.

## Central African Republic

### Several killed in suspected rebel attack

According to varying reports, eleven or twelve civilians were killed and a number injured in an attack on a market in the village of Mann and nearby Mbéré (on the border with Cameroon, Ouham-Pendé prefecture) on 14.11.21. The attack is being blamed on the rebel group Retour, Réclamation et Réhabilitation (3R). According to certain reports, the civilians were caught up in fighting between 3R and the army.

### Minister arrested, accused of crimes against humanity

It has been reported in the media that Bouba Ali Hassan (known as Hassan Bouba), the minister of livestock farming and animal health who is known as an influential figure, was arrested at his office on 19.11.21. The minister is to stand trial before the Cour pénale spéciale (CPS), a special court comprising Central African and international judges which is competent for cases involving serious human rights violations committed since 2003. The arrest warrant against Hassan Bouba, which has been viewed by a press agency, is based among other things on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, without specifying the acts concerned. The minister is the former number two in the leadership of the rebel group Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC). A report by American NGO The Sentry holds him, together with UPC leader Ali Darassa, directly responsible for an attack on a camp for displaced people in Alindao (east of the country) in November 2018 in which at least 112 people were killed.

## DR Congo

### Civilians killed in attacks in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri

There are reports in the media of new attacks with civilian casualties in the country's eastern provinces.

38 people were reportedly killed in an attack on a hospital in the Beni region (North Kivu province) on 12.11.21 which is being blamed on the Islamist group Forces démocratiques alliées (ADF). According to the army, the ADF is stepping up its attacks on healthcare establishments and pharmacies in order to stock up on medicines.

At least 17 people were killed in a village near the provincial capital of Ituri, Bunia, on 15.11.21. Most of the dead reportedly belonged to the Hema people. Chini ya Kilima (Force patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo, FPIC), a group which claims to represent the Bira people, is suspected of being behind the attack.

At least six people were killed and seven injured in South Kivu province on the night of 15.11.21. No exact details of the location have been released. According to an army representative, a dozen houses were also pillaged. He attributes the attack to a group by the name of "Coalition Ngumino Twigwaneho", which comprises members of the Banyamulenge ethnic group.

### Ex-president Kabila: Accusation of large-scale embezzlement

A research network comprising 19 media organisations and five NGOs has begun releasing its own findings relating to the embezzlement of public funds by ex-president Joseph Kabila and his family under the title "Congo Hold-up". In particular, the network accuses Kabila and his brother Francis Selemani, former manager of the Congolese branch of the Gabon-based BGFIBank, of having "siphoned off" at least US\$ 138 million.

## Egypt

### Extended powers to combat epidemics and pandemics

On 17.11.21 a law granting the government extended powers in the cases of pandemics and epidemics was passed by a majority in parliament. The 25 measures stipulated in the law include the closure of state and religious institutions, restrictions on freedom of movement, a ban on gatherings and demonstrations, the reduction of costs of treatment at private hospitals and punishment for the publication of alleged fake news relating to health issues. Under the new law, corresponding offences are punishable with one-year prison sentences and high fines, although the law apparently excludes journalists from punishment. Since the beginning of the pandemic, a number of media representatives and medical staff have been arrested for posts on social media criticising the government and its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, with prison sentences handed down in several cases.

## Ethiopia

### **UN: Arbitrary arrests of ethnic Tigrayans**

The UN announced on 16.11.21 that at least 1,000 people, for the most part Ethnic Tigrayans, have been arrested nationwide since the state of emergency was declared at the beginning of November 2021 (cf. BN of 08.11.21). A number of reports indicate a markedly higher figure. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has expressed concern at the reports of arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, which will “increase division and resentment in the people”. The arrests also included over 70 staff of the United Nations’ World Food Programme (WFP) (cf. BN of 15.11.21), most of whom have since been released again.

Prison conditions are described as bad. Many of those arrested are reportedly being held at the Awash Arba military camp in the regional state of Afar or at overcrowded police stations, and are not informed as to why they are being detained. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the detainees have no access to legal support and are commonly subject to abuse.

The government states that the arrests are not ethnically motivated, but are rather aimed at detaining supporters of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). Weapons and military uniforms have allegedly been found among the detainees. The security forces are receiving support from local vigilante groups. Wearing orange jackets and armed with sticks, these carry out checks and hand over “spies” to the police. According to certain sources, mothers with children and elderly people are also among those being detained.

## India

### **Kashmir: TRF commander killed**

Five suspected rebels were killed in two separate incidents on 17.11.21. The commander of the newly established armed resistance movement The Resistance Front (TRF) is said to be among the dead. This group is believed to be behind the latest wave of targeted murders of Hindus and itinerant labourers (cf. BN of 15.11.21). It is suspected that the TRF receives support from the radical Islamist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

### **Reform to liberalise the agricultural sector repealed**

Following more than a year of continuing farmers’ protests, prime minister Narendra Modi repealed the reform aimed at liberalising the agricultural sector on 19.11.21.

## Iran

### **2019 November protests: Identities of at least 323 dead confirmed**

An updated report by Amnesty International (ai) contains a list of the confirmed identities of people killed while taking part in the nationwide protests between 15.11. and 19.11.19. According to the report, at least 323 died when the demonstrations were broken up by force in 37 towns and cities and eight provinces. The total death toll had previously been put at 304. The highest tolls were reported for the provinces of Tehran, Alborz and Khuzestan. ai suspects that the relatives of other killed protesters may be staying silent due to a fear of official consequences. In the aftermath of the protests there were reports in the press of well over a thousand deaths in all.

### **Arrests**

According to reports in the media, the prominent civil rights activist Narges Mohammadi was arrested once again in Karaj (Alborz province) on 16.11.21 at a memorial event for one of the victims of the 2019 November protests and taken to the Evin prison in Tehran. The activist was previously in custody from 2015 until October 2020 and was most recently sentenced to 30 months in prison, 80 lashes and a fine for propaganda against the regime, slander and rebellion against the prison administration (cf. BN of 31.05.21). A human rights organisation has reported that three male individuals were arrested by security forces in Behbahan (Khuzestan province) on 16.11.21 and taken to prisons in the cities of Behbahan and Ahvaz. According to the organisation, a number of individuals were subpoenaed in the region at the time of the second anniversary of the November protests, presumably in an attempt by the authorities to prevent ceremonies for those killed in the protests.

## **Iraq**

### **Combat operations against IS / escalation in Diyala**

Following the escalation of the conflict with IS in the Muqadadiyah district of Diyala province (cf. BN of 08.11.21), the security forces have carried out further arrests and coordinated operations. A new series of raids on IS retreats and sleeper cells in Diyala began on 18.11.21 and is focused on the region to the east of the Hamrin mountains. Suspects have also been arrested in Ninive province.

### **Protests against election / discussion on disbandment of militias**

On 18.11.21 Muqtada as-Sadr, the leader of the Sadrists who are named after him, publicly stipulated conditions for the participation of other groups in a future government. This led to a public debate with Abu Ali al-Askari, one of the military leaders of the influential Kata'ib Hezbollah militia, which is held responsible for many attacks on coalition troops. The militia's political wing suffered major losses in the election and the popularity of the militias as a whole has been in decline for some time. Sadr called on other parties to disband their own armed wings or to integrate them into the Iraqi security forces. Al-Askari said he would be prepared to do so if Sadr and the Kurdish Peshmerga did the same. Sadr responded the next day by officially disbanding one of his movement's four brigades. A few hours later, Al-Askari announced that one brigade of Kata'ib Hezbollah would also be disbanded, stating that he hoped this represented a step towards a more peaceful Iraq. The same day witnessed a further demonstration by supporters of pro-Iranian groups in Baghdad rejecting the election results. In contrast to the preceding weeks, only a few hundred people took part, however.

## **Lebanon**

### **Economic situation**

Lebanon's economy remains on a downward spiral. In addition to various other subsidies, government funding for a number of medicines, in particular such that serve to treat chronic illnesses such as high blood pressure, depression or schizophrenia, has been withdrawn or strongly reduced. The previous monthly budget of US\$ 120 million has been cut to US\$ 35 million. A marked increase in the mortality rate relating to easily treatable illnesses is feared as a result.

### **Elections**

The registration deadline for the election in March 2022 expired on 20.11.21. Interest is particularly high among Lebanese living abroad this time, with more than 240,000 having registered to vote. As only around 4 million people are eligible to vote in Lebanon, expatriates have a considerable influence on the outcome of elections. Only half as many Lebanese expatriates registered to vote in the 2018 election.

## **Madagascar**

### **Continuing famine**

The number of people exposed to acute famine has doubled to around 30,000. In all, 1.3 million people in the south of the country are on the verge of famine. No easing of the situation is in sight.

## **Morocco**

### **Polisario Front commander killed**

Spanish and pro-government Moroccan media report that Taleb Haidar, a commander of the Polisario Front, was killed by a Moroccan drone on 14.11.21. He was reportedly travelling in a civilian vehicle with a Mauritanian number plate in a buffer zone to the west of the Moroccan Western Sahara Wall. No official comment on the matter has been forthcoming from the Moroccan government as yet. The Polisario Front announced back on 14.11.20 that it was no longer observing the ceasefire. On 21.10.20 the Polisario Front began obstructing the movement of goods in the buffer zone between Morocco and Mauritania. Tensions have been rising continually in Western Sahara since

2020 (cf. BN of 23.11.20) and relations with neighbouring Algeria have been deteriorating. Algeria broke off diplomatic relations in August 2021. On 29.10.21 the UN Security Council extended the MINURSO peace mission in Western Sahara by one year (cf. BN of 08.11.21).

## **Myanmar**

### **Fighting, raids and deaths during interrogation in various parts of the country**

Fighting occurred between the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) and the People's Defence Forces (PDF) of various townships in Saw (Magway region) on 17.11. and 19.11.21. According to reports in the media, 20 Tatmadaw soldiers were killed by guerilla attacks and land mines. The Saw PDF reported two fatalities. On 14.11.21 the Tatmadaw carried out a series of air strikes in Hpakant (Kachin State). According to local sources, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) had captured three military bases in Nang Jang Kuu prior to the strikes.

On 17.11.21 the Tatmadaw detained 13 people in raids on eleven villages in Yesagyo Township (Magway) and used them as human shields. Some 3,000 people fled the villages. The junta forces were looking in Yesagyo for PDF members who attacked a police post in Pakan Nge on 13.11.21.

One man died while being interrogated by security forces in Labutta (Ayeyarwady region) on 12.11. and another man died in similar circumstances in Thabeikkyin (Mandalay region) on 17.11.21. One of the men had been linked to bomb attacks, while the other was a teacher who had joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). Three members of the Kalay PDF have died in military custody in Kalay (Sagaing region). They had been arrested together with nine other PDF members on 16.11.21. Following the arrests, fighting broke out between the Tatmadaw and four PDFs from Sagaing and Chin State, and continued until 18.11.21.

### **Restrictions on riding motorbikes in four regions**

Riding on the rear seat of motorbikes has been prohibited since 17.11.21 in various communities of the Yangon, Tanintharyi, Sagaing and Mandalay regions. A state administrative council directive stipulates that anyone contravening the ban is to be shot dead. A general ban on riding motorbikes and three-wheeled bicycles applies in a number of communities. On 20.11.21 security forces shot at two men on a bicycle in Chaung-U (Sagaing), killing the pillion passenger. The military is imposing such measures in an attempt to prevent ride-by attacks on junta forces.

## **Niger**

### **Attack in border region again claims many lives**

The Nigerien government stated on 17.11.21 that an attack on a camp of the self-defence militia near the village of Bakorat close to the border with Mali in the Tahoua region had claimed the lives of at least 25 militia members. According to reports in the media, a gun battle broke out and continued for a number of hours before Nigerien security forces were able to drive off the attackers. The attackers reportedly also suffered casualties. Only one member of the militia survived. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack to date. The numerous attacks in the border region of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso (cf. BN of 08.11.21) are frequently linked to the jihadist groups Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). 137 people died in an attack on Bakorat and other villages in the Tahoua region back in March 2021 (cf. BN of 29.03.21).

## **Nigeria**

### **Religious freedom: Nigeria removed from black list**

According to reports in the media, on 18.11.21 the US government removed Nigeria from a list of countries which are accused of systematic, sustained and serious violations of religious freedom. The activities of the Boko Haram and ISWAP jihadist groups, which operate in particular in the north-east, continue to be described as very concerning. Nigeria was placed on the watch list in 2020. The list comprises not only countries which commit serious violations of religious freedom but also those which the US government sees as doing too little to counter such violations.

### **Deadly attacks in the north-west**

According to reports in the media, the week of 15.11.21 again witnessed people being killed in attacks by unknown assailants in the north-west. Particularly striking was an attack on 15.11.21 in the town of Illela in Sokoto State on the border with Niger in which at least 13 people died, according to official information. Also in Sokoto State, attacks on several villages in the Sabon Birni region on the night of 16.11.21 left at least 21 people dead. The region is confronted with a continuing wave of looting, murders and kidnappings for ransom money by armed gangs (cf. BN of 15.11.21).

### **ai calls for greater commitment to combating sexual violence**

Amnesty International (ai) has called on Nigerian authorities to do more to protect women and girls from sexual violence. In a report published by ai on 17.11.21 entitled “Nigeria: A Harrowing Journey – Access To Justice for Women and Girls Survivors of Rape” the NGO highlights the fact that rape continues to be one of the most common violations of human rights in Nigeria. ai further bemoans the fact that rapists are sometimes able to avoid criminal prosecution by paying bribes, while rape victims face stigmatisation if they report their cases to the police. According to Nigeria’s National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), 11,200 cases of rape were reported in 2020.

## **Pakistan**

### **TLP leader released from prison**

On 18.11.21 the leader of the Islamist party Tehreek-e Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) was released from a prison in Lahore (Punjab), ten days later than originally announced (cf. BN 15.11.21). Upon his arrival at the party’s headquarters, the Rehmatul Lil Alameen mosque, he was welcomed by hundreds of cheering supporters. The TLP is an Islamist group belonging to the Barelvi Islamic movement which has enjoyed widespread support among the population nationwide since it was founded in 2015 through its vociferous proclamation of anti-blasphemy slogans.

### **Enforced chemical castration for serious sex offences**

On 17.11.21 the Pakistani parliament passed a law providing for enforced chemical castration in cases of serious sex offences. Chemical castration is a reversible hormonal or drug treatment which temporarily suppresses the sexual appetite. The draft law also provides for the establishment of special courts to speed up legal proceedings and ensure that cases of sexual abuse are adjudged swiftly, and preferably within four months.

The Karachi-based NGO War Against Rape estimates that less than three per cent of cases of sexual assault in Pakistan lead to a conviction. Amnesty International describes chemical castration without consent as a cruel and inhumane punishment. Human rights organisations are categorically opposed to more severe penalties, arguing that reforms within the Pakistani police and judiciary accompanied by a greater emphasis on awareness campaigns for parents and children offer a better approach to fighting the causes of sexual abuse and preventing such offences.

### **Attacks in North and South Waziristan**

On 16.11.21 seven people were injured in a hand grenade attack on a gathering of tribal elders (jirga) in the former tribal area of South Waziristan, which belongs to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Among the gathered elders were leaders of the religious party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI). No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

According to summarising reports in the media, one person was killed and three injured in three separate attacks in neighbouring North Waziristan on 15.11.21. Two members of the security forces were among those injured.

## **Palestinian territories / Israel**

### **West Bank: Violence against Palestinians**

An Israeli human rights organisation has reported that three Palestinian farmers were injured by Jewish settlers while tending their land on 15.11.21. The settlers reportedly attacked the Palestinian group with sticks, stones and pepper spray.

According to the organisation, such attacks by settlers have been an almost daily occurrence in recent weeks.

### **West Bank: Man killed during arrest by Israeli military**

According to the Palestinian authorities, a Palestinian man was killed by the Israeli military at the entrance to the town of Tammun, near Nablos, on 16.11.21.

The military stated that it came under fire while in the process of arresting two people and opened fire on a passing vehicle after an explosive device was thrown in their direction from the vehicle.

### **East Jerusalem: Teenage attacker shot dead**

According to reports in the press, a Palestinian teenager attacked Israeli soldiers with a knife in East Jerusalem, near to the Via Dolorosa, on 17.11.21. He injured two soldiers and was subsequently killed by bullets fired by a third soldier.

### **West Bank: Mix-up in return of an alleged attacker's body**

It has been reported in the media that the body of a Palestinian killed by the Israeli military was handed over to his family one day later than planned, on 20.11.21, due to a case of mistaken identity. The Israeli military said it intends to investigate how the mistake occurred.

The incident sparked renewed criticism of the Israeli authorities' practice of withholding the bodies of alleged attackers. The authorities claim that the practice is intended to deter future attacks, in addition to which the mortal remains serve as a means of applying pressure in negotiations on the exchange of prisoners. Human rights organisations criticise the practice as collective punishment for the families concerned.

According to a Palestinian human rights group, Israeli authorities are currently withholding the bodies of some 80 Palestinians.

### **East Jerusalem: Hamas member kills Israeli and injures four people**

On 21.11.21 a member of Hamas opened fire on civilians and members of the military with an automatic weapon near to the Temple Mount, killing one Israeli and injuring four people. The attacker is said to be a high-ranking member of Hamas in East Jerusalem who worked as a teacher at a nearby school.

Hamas in the Gaza Strip did not accept any responsibility for the attack, but praised it as an act of heroism. Had the attacker been acting on orders, this would have been the first ordered attack in East Jerusalem since the war between Hamas and Israel in May 2021.

## **Somalia**

### **Attack**

According to reports in the press, between seven and eight people were killed and at least eleven injured in a bomb attack in Bardale (Bay region) on 19.11.21. The attack took place at a busy marketplace. No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

### **Journalist killed in attack**

The popular Somalian journalist and presenter Abdiaziz Mohamud Guled, also known as Abdiaziz Afrika, was killed in a suicide attack in Mogadishu on 20.11.21. Two other people, including the director of Somali National TV, were seriously injured. Police reports indicate a targeted attack. Al-Shabaab has already claimed responsibility for the attack. Guled was director of state-funded Radio Mogadishu and had adopted a critical stance towards Al-Shabaab in the past.

## **Sudan**

### **Military coup**

There have been reports of numerous cases of arbitrary arrest and imprisonment in the wake of the demonstrations of 13.11.21 (cf. BN of 15.11.21). Representatives of the national and international media were prevented from reporting on the demonstrations and in some instances were attacked, detained or even expelled from the country in which they had been reporting.

Renewed demonstrations and protests against the military coup occurred on 17.11.21. The protests took place in the three cities of Khartoum, Omdurman and Bahri. 15 people were killed and more than 100 injured. This was the highest number of casualties on a single day since the coup on 25.10.21. The police again took tough action against the demonstrators, using live ammunition and tear gas. The protests continued throughout the night and into 18.11.21. The events of 17.11.21 took the death toll in connection with the protests to 39. According to other reports, security forces additionally attempted to block a number of hospitals in Omdurman and Bahri and to carry out searches of hospitals using tear gas.

Following his arrest and detention by Sudanese security forces on 14.11.21 (cf. BN of 15.11.21), the head of the Al-Jazeera office in Sudan was released again on 16.11.21. According to reports in the media, access to the internet and mobile phone networks has also been unblocked. Ahead of this decision to restore access, there had been court rulings condemning the blocking and calling for access to be restored, but these had been ignored. According to further reports in the media, the military and Abdullah Hamdok reached an agreement on 21.11.21 allowing Hamdok to be released from house arrest and reinstated as prime minister. He is apparently to put together an independent cabinet consisting of technocrats. In addition, all political prisoners and imprisoned politicians are to be released, the events, outbreaks of violence and deaths in the past protests are to be investigated and those responsible are to be brought to justice. The new cabinet is apparently to remain in power on a temporary basis up to the next elections and Hamdok is free to make appointments to the cabinet as he sees fit. The days before, during and after the agreement between the military and prime minister Hamdok witnessed demonstrations and protests, in the course of which two more people were killed and an arson attack was carried out on a police station. Tear gas was repeatedly deployed and apartments, houses and mosques were searched. Various opposition groups and parties strictly reject the agreement and any cooperation with the military. They have announced further protests and are calling for those responsible for the coup to be put on trial and for an entirely civilian government to be instated.

## **Syria**

### **UN report on Dar'a**

A situation report published by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on 19.11.21 examines the humanitarian situation in the southern part of the governorate of Dar'a in the wake of the military confrontation between government troops and remaining rebels in September 2021 (cf. BN of 13.09.21). According to the report, the majority of the approximately 38,000 residents who fled the area have since returned to their homes. Around 3,700 people are reportedly unable to return, however, because their homes have been destroyed. Residual munitions are also hampering returns. Approx. 1,198 homes have reportedly been destroyed or damaged in the governorate's capital, which is also named Dar'a.

## **Turkey**

### **Arrests of politicians and trade union representatives**

18 people, including 14 politicians and also trade union representatives, were arrested in raids in the south-eastern province of Diyarbakir on 15.11.21 on charges of membership of a terrorist organisation - in this case the PKK. Among those arrested are local officials of the pro-Kurdish HDP, members of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) and the Socialist Party of Kurdistan (PSK) as well as local officials of the union representing employees in the health and social services (SES) and the education sector union, Eđitim-Sen. The accused allegedly took part in protests against the dismissal of HDP officials and drafted press releases expressing solidarity with imprisoned members of the Eđitim-Sen union.

### **Crackdown on PKK**

The Turkish interior ministry has announced that a new counter-terrorism operation against the PKK was launched in the south-east of the country on 16.11.21. Operation "Eren-Winter-4" is aimed at uncovering PKK hide-outs and forcing the groups out of the region. In all, 1,240 security personnel and 80 task forces are to take part in the operation.

### **Verdict on Istanbul Convention**

On 18.11.21 the State Council, Turkey's supreme administrative court, rejected all representations calling for the annulment of a presidential decree which resulted in the country's withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the so-called Istanbul Convention). The plaintiffs had asserted that the president did not possess the authority to proclaim the withdrawal by decree. As a result of the State Council's verdict, the decision is final and no longer appealable.

## **Uganda**

### **Bomb attacks in Kampala**

At least four people were killed and three suicide attackers also died in two bomb attacks in the city centre on 16.11.21. 36 people were injured, some seriously. Security personnel prevented a further attack and seized explosives. The police are assuming that these were targeted attacks by members of the IS-linked Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), similarly to the other attacks of recent weeks (cf. BN of 25.10.21 and 08.11.21). IS has claimed responsibility for the attacks. In view of the geographic proximity of one bomb attack to the parliamentary building, the police is treating the incident as a targeted attack on parliament. 21 people have so far been arrested in connection with the latest attacks. Four ADF members and a Muslim cleric who were linked to the attacks have reportedly been killed by Ugandan security forces. Three suspects, including minors, were prevented from crossing the border into DR Congo and arrested. According to the police, further attacks cannot be ruled out.

## **Vietnam**

### **Blogger sentenced to several years in prison**

According to various reports in the media, a court in the province of Khanh Hoa sentenced a blogger to seven years' imprisonment on 15.11.21. He allegedly defamed and vilified the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and the state, as well as the revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh. The conviction took place in accordance with Art. 117 of the criminal code (propagation of subversive information).

## **Yemen**

### **Drone attacks**

Houthi rebels fired 14 drones into Saudi Arabia on 20.11.21. The targets included facilities of the state oil company, Aramco, in Jeddah, as well as other targets in Riyadh, Abha, Jazan and Najran. Saudi Arabia launched retaliatory strikes, firing 13 drones at targets in Sanaa, Marib and Saada. There has been no reporting on any injuries or damage caused. The Houthis have been intensifying their attacks on Saudi Arabia for a number of months now.

### **Houthis detain UN and embassy staff**

At the beginning of November 2021 Houthi rebels broke into the abandoned US embassy building in Sanaa and arrested a number of local Yemeni staff. The majority of these local staff have since been released again. A small number are still being held by the Houthi rebels, however, similarly to two UN employees who have been detained by the Houthis since the beginning of November 2021. The UN Security Council has unanimously condemned the Houthi's actions.