



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Government affairs

According to reports, clashes occurred between Turkmen border troops and Taliban fighters in the Khamad district of Jawzjan province on 03.01.22. Turkmenistan has suspended trade at the Aqina border crossing in response to the clash. A Taliban spokesperson denied the incident on Twitter. On 04.01.22, Taliban leader Abdul Ghani Baradar said in an interview that former members of parliament would not be considered for the new cabinet because they were corrupt. On 26.12.21, the Taliban had dissolved the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission, saying they were no longer needed. On 06.01.22, the former deputy head of the Electoral Complaints Commission in Kabul was arrested by the Taliban. This was another repudiation of both parliamentary democracy and inclusive government. On 04.01.22, a spokesperson for the Ministry of the Interior stated that police officers would soon be issued with uniforms. This is to enable police officers to be distinguished from other armed persons. Taliban border troops destroyed border fences erected by the Pakistani army on the disputed border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Durand Line. A Taliban spokesperson said that the border management had not been clarified and that Pakistan should therefore desist from erecting fences. Pakistan's Foreign Minister announced that he would try to solve the problem by diplomatic means. On 04.01.22, the Taliban in Herat province demanded that shop owners saw the heads off mannequins which are said to be un-Islamic idols, saying they need to be disposed of completely. On 05.01.22, the Taliban released 40 prisoners from a jail in Kandahar who, according to them, had been detained without having committed a crime. Prisoners are also to be released from prisons in other provinces. The Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Balkh province announced on 05.01.22 that men who do not go to the mosque for prayer may face criminal prosecution. In the same speech, it said that women may only leave the house if absolutely necessary and only if accompanied by a male relative. On 07.01.22, the Taliban banned women from entering bathhouses in the northern provinces. On 08.01.22, a university professor was arrested by the Taliban in Kabul for allegedly criticising the government in TV interviews and on social media. On 09.01.22, the Taliban put up posters throughout Kabul recommending that women wear a veil (hijab or burqa).

Economic and humanitarian situation

On 01.01.22, the Taliban simultaneously dismissed all heads of public health services in the 34 provinces and replaced them with their own members. The UN claimed to have collected US\$ 1.5 billion for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan. Heavy rain and snowfall across the country caused numerous floods and avalanches on 04.01.22 and 05.01.22, killing several people. Traffic was temporarily disrupted on several main roads.

Protests

On 04.01.22, further protests were held by women, both in public and in private spaces, against the Taliban's disregard for women's rights, with demands spreading on social media. Doctors at a hospital in Samangan province protested with slogans such as "We have nothing to eat!" as they have not received their salaries in six months.

According to reports, the protest was forcibly ended on the instructions of the provincial public health commissioner. Protests took place in Ghazni province because passports were not issued or given out as announced.

Albania

Riots erupt at party headquarters

According to media reports, thousands of supporters of the former Albanian head of state and prime minister Sali Berisha stormed the headquarters of the conservative opposition party Democratic Party of Albania (PD) on 08.01.22. Protesters forced their way into the building and tried to enter the offices of PD leader Lulzim Basha. However, they were unable to break in because of the security precautions there. The police only intervened after more than an hour and dispersed the crowd using water cannons and tear gas. An internal power struggle between Berisha and Basha has fuelled unrest which has been simmering since Berisha was thrown out of the PD parliamentary group in September 2021 at Basha's instigation.

Bangladesh

5,000 rendered homeless after fire breaks out in refugee camp

On 09.01.22, over 5,000 Rohingya lost their shelter when a major fire broke out at Camp 16 in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar District, destroying about 1,200 shelters. There were no reports of deaths or injuries. A health centre and 20 homes had already gone up in flames in Camp 20 on 02.01.22.

Deadly violence at local elections

On 05.01.22 and 06.01.22, several people were killed and wounded in a number of districts during the fifth of seven phases of the Union Parishad (Union Council) elections that began in June 2021. According to various reports, between ten and at least eleven people died in clashes between supporters of rival parties and as a result of police shootings. Dozens were injured, including media workers, and numerous cases of vandalism and ballot paper theft were reported.

Benin

Two killed in attack

On 06.01.22, two soldiers died in a mine explosion when passing through the Atacora Department near the border with Burkina Faso.

Burkina Faso

Several people killed in attack on village

Eleven people were killed in an attack carried out by unknown individuals on the village of Ankouna in the Centre-North region on 05.01.22.

China

COVID-19 pandemic: rigid lockdown measures claim lives

After 143 COVID-19 cases had been recorded in Xi'an (capital of northwest China's Shaanxi province) within two weeks, the authorities sealed off the city on 22.12.21 and imposed a lockdown on its 13 million inhabitants. While initially one person per household was allowed to leave the house every three days to go shopping, since 27.12.21 this has only been permitted for those undergoing compulsory corona tests. Shops for daily needs have been forced to close, residential complexes and building entrances are being guarded. A total of around 40,000 police officers are ensuring the measures are being observed, and violations have repeatedly been punished with violence. On 29.12.21, the city administration acknowledged difficulties in securing food supplies after initially censoring calls

for help on social media. The government aid deliveries initiated as a result of these protests are reportedly often insufficient and only reach many housing complexes after long delays. People affected have begun bartering to get food and hygiene products, and several have already tried to flee the city.

Two women miscarried and two women died between 29.12.21 and 03.01.22 after receiving medical care too late because hospitals have been turning away many critical patients who did not have a valid COVID test or because of their colour code, or have been treating them only after delays of several hours. Some sources say six people have died since the end of December 2021. The head of Xi'an's health department, Liu Shunzhi, publicly apologised on 06.01.22 for an incident in which a woman who was eight months pregnant miscarried outside a hospital.

The authorities in Xi'an registered 2,004 cases of COVID-19 between 09.12.21 and 10.01.22. Forty-two thousand people were moved to improvised and often unheated quarantine facilities, with some of the transfers taking place at night and without notice. Since 05.01.22, the outbreak has been considered largely under control, but restrictions have not yet been lifted. Seventy people have been punished for spreading "harmful information related to the pandemic" as of 01.01.22, according to the Shaanxi Provincial Department of Public Security.

The authorities imposed another strict lockdown in the city of Yuzhou (Henan province) on 03.01.22 after three new cases of COVID-19 were detected among the population of 1.1 million. Partial curfews are also in place in Henan's provincial capital of Zhengzhou and in two counties under the jurisdiction of Luoyang and Zhoukou (also Henan). Mass tests are currently being conducted in Shenzhen and Tianjin. The authorities confirmed the discovery of the first locally transmitted infections with the Omicron variant in Tianjin on 08.01.22 and decided to restrict the movements of the population.

Hong Kong: additional news portal suspended

After the pro-democracy online magazine Stand News was forced to close on 29.12.21 (cf. BN of 03.01.22), the online news portal CitizenNews was also shut down on 04.01.22. The platform stated that it could no longer report without fear due to the deteriorating media environment.

Colombia

Armed clashes between ELN fighters and FARC dissidents

According to the Ministry of Defence, at least 23 people were killed in armed clashes that erupted between fighters of the National Liberation Army (ELN) and FARC dissidents (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) in the Arauca region in the Colombian-Venezuelan border area on 02.01.22. Other sources say up to 27 people were killed, claiming that of the bodies identified so far, two were minors, two were leaders of the 10th Front of FARC dissidents and seven were Venezuelan nationals. In addition, 52 families have been forcibly displaced due to the conflict. President Ivan Duque deployed more than 620 military personnel to the region in the light of these circumstances. According to the Colombian Defence Minister Diego Molano, the conflict originated on Venezuelan territory and then spread to Colombia. However, his Venezuelan counterpart denies this.

Terrorist attack in Cali

On 07.01.22, at least 13 members of the police force were injured in the Puerto Rellena district of Cali in a terrorist attack claimed by the National Liberation Army (ELN). According to the head of security in Cali, Colonel Soler Parra, a remote-controlled explosive device was attached to a vehicle belonging to the Mobile Anti-Disturbances Squadron (Escuadrón Movil Antidisturbios (ESMAD)) security force. Subsequently, Defence Minister Diego Molano announced that a reward of COP 1 billion (approx. EUR 220,000, as of 10.01.22) would be paid for the leader of the ELN's urban wing, El Rolo.

Cuba

Suspected expulsion of two Cuban journalists, admission to El Salvador

Two journalists from the independent Cuban news website ADN Cuba, Héctor Valdés and Esteban Rodríguez, who are also members of the San Isidro movement, which has repeatedly protested against the restriction of civil liberties, have allegedly been expelled from Cuba, according to media reports. The two journalists say they were

forced to leave the country. Rodríguez was taken directly to the airport from Combinado del Este prison, where he had been detained for eight months and subjected to torture for taking part in protests. On 05.01.22, Human Rights Watch's Executive Director for Latin America urged countries in the region to take in the two journalists after Nicaragua, which is the only country in the region that allows Cuban nationals to enter without a visa, initially refused them entry. They subsequently remained at the stopover location in San Salvador on 06.01.22, where they will initially receive humanitarian assistance until their migration status is clarified, according to the Directorate General of Migration. ADN Cuba described the events as forcing the two journalists into exile.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

North Kivu province: protests by demobilised militiamen

According to media reports, hundreds of demobilised militiamen of unknown former group affiliation protested on 02.01.22, not far from the provincial capital Goma (North Kivu), against the poor living conditions in their accommodation camp and their pending reintegration into civilian life. The protests were reportedly triggered by the death of a demobilised fighter due to the lack of food and medical care. The Congolese armed forces had violently dispersed the protests with the use of firearms, killing one former militiaman. According to local civil society, hundreds of demobilised militiamen have already returned to the bush because of the poor living conditions. The interim coordinator of the disarmament, demobilisation, community reintegration and stabilisation programme (P-DDRCS) in North Kivu Province, Jacques Katembo, said that the living conditions of former militiamen were similar in other demobilisation/shelter camps in the province. According to reports from 2020 and 2021, lack of shelter, inadequate or non-existent access to food and medical care have repeatedly led to surrendered or already demobilised militiamen returning to the bush and seeking to rejoin armed groups. In 2021, another thousand fighters or militia/rebel leaders signalled their intention to disarm, according to media reports, among other things, on condition that the militiamen receive adequate supplies.

Number of human rights violations increases in conflict-ridden areas

According to a report released by the United Nations Joint Office for Human Rights (BCNUDH) on 05.01.22, more than 800 human rights violations were documented across the country in the reporting month of November 2021. It says the number of human rights violations documented nationwide has increased compared to the previous year. The number of human rights violations documented across the country has allegedly increased by 61% compared to the reporting month of October 2021. 94% of human rights violations were committed in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, which are under siege, as well as in the provinces of South Kivu and Tanganyika, with most cases documented in North Kivu and Tanganyika. The report says state actors, mainly members of the Armed Forces (FARDC), but also police officers and members of the national intelligence agency (ANR), were responsible for 39% and non-state armed groups for 61% of the human rights violations documented throughout the country. While the FARDC was responsible for most of the human rights violations among the parties to the conflict, the armed groups Mai-Mai-Nyatara (North Kivu), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR, North Kivu)), the Allied Democratic Forces (Forces démocratiques alliées (ADF, North Kivu and Ituri)) and the militia Cooperative for Development of the Congo (Coopérative de développement du Congo (CODECO, Ituri)) were responsible for most of the cases among non-state actors. Radio France International, which also refers to the BCNUDH report, says that in the context of FARDC military operations in the conflict-ridden territory of Djugu (Ituri), members of communities have been subjected to reprisals by the FARDC for even suspected/supposed association with or support for armed groups. According to the Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), Bintou Keita, the restoration of the nationwide state monopoly on the use of force is progressing. The violence perpetrated by non-state armed groups is now limited to just 10% of the state territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ethiopia

People killed in air strike in Tigray

An air strike carried out by the Ethiopian air force on a school in the north-west of the conflict-ridden Tigray region, which was housing several hundred displaced people, is believed to have killed at least 56 people and injured 30 others, according to information provided by humanitarian aid workers on 07.01.22. There has been no independent confirmation of the incident near the town of Dedebit in the border area with Eritrea so far. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has said that humanitarian aid in the region will be suspended for the time being due to the ongoing threat of drone strikes.

HRW: Ethiopia is mistreating deported Tigrayans

According to a report published by Human Rights Watch on 04.01.22, Ethiopian authorities allegedly arbitrarily detained, abused and abducted Tigrayan migrant workers on their return from Saudi Arabia. Some were reportedly arrested directly at airports, others at checkpoints en route to the Tigray regional state, and taken to reception centres in Addis Ababa or to detention facilities in the regional states of Afar, Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR)

Saudi Arabia is home to around 6.3 million foreign workers, most of whom entered the country illegally. A large number of them come from Ethiopia where they frequently experience discrimination and mistreatment. The Ethiopian government supports Saudi Arabia in the repatriation of foreign workers.

Ethiopian government announces release of political prisoners

The Ethiopian government announced on 07.01.22, the day Ethiopia celebrates Orthodox Christmas, that it would pardon and release some of the country's most prominent political prisoners, including Orom opposition leader Jawar Mohammed, who had been detained following violent anti-government protests in July 2020 (cf. BN of 06.07.20), and senior officials of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), who have been in detention since December 2020. At the same time, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed called for "national reconciliation".

Guatemala

Police officer killed during raid in the municipality of Nahualá

According to a statement issued by government sources on 07.01.22, one officer of the National Civil Police (PNC) was killed and eight others were injured during a raid in the municipality of Nahualá, department of Sololá, following attacks by an armed group. The raid was intended to solve a homicide committed by 12 members of civil society and a police officer on 17.12.21. The conflicts in December 2021 were sparked by a land dispute between the inhabitants of the municipalities of Nahualá and Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán, which keep escalating and which prompted President Giammattei to declare a state of emergency in these areas on 20.12.21.

Haiti

Two journalists killed by criminal group

According to reports by the radio station Écoute FM on 06.01.22, two journalists were killed in a shootout by a criminal group in the Laboule 12 neighbourhood on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince while researching the current security situation and the clashes for supremacy in the region between various armed gangs; a third managed to escape.

Assassination attempt on Prime Minister Ariel Henry

According to official reports, an assassination attempt was made on Prime Minister Ariel Henry in the northern city of Gonaïves on 01.01.22 during a ceremony marking Haiti's Independence Day. According to local media reports, one person was killed and two others were injured in the ensuing gunfire exchange between security forces and the armed assailants, although initial police reports do not confirm this. The security situation in the country is precarious which is why Henry had announced that he would crack down on armed criminal groups whose influence

has increased since President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in July 2021 (cf. BN of 12.07.21). A gang leader had threatened the Prime Minister shortly before the assassination attempt.

India

Kashmir: planned reform of the distribution of seats in the Regional Assembly

A reform of the distribution of seats in the regional assembly is planned in the Indian-administered part of Kashmir (Jammu and Kashmir). Until now, the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley had 46 seats and the Hindu-majority Jammu had 37 seats. The Kashmir Valley is to be allocated one more seat (47) and Jammu six more seats (43). The Muslim population fears a further loss of political influence, as the Hindu section of the population will be proportionally favoured by the reform. According to the 2011 census, 12.5 million people live in Jammu and Kashmir, of whom 68% are Muslims and 28% are Hindus. The majority of the population in the Jammu region are Hindus.

Online harassment of Muslim women

A fake app called "Bulli Bai" has caused a stir in the Indian media, in which well-known Muslim women were put up for sale in an online auction. The app displayed images of women, including well-known journalists, activists, a female pilot and a female politician and made derogatory comments about them. Several of the women involved had previously expressed criticism of growing Hindu nationalism and the treatment of religious minorities. The app has since been removed and the suspects arrested. "Bulli Bai" is a derogatory term for Muslim women. A similar fake app called "Sulli Deals" had appeared back in July 2021.

Iran

Khuzestan province: threat to teachers in Shadegan district

According to media reports, teachers in the district of Shadegan in the southern province of Khuzestan have been instructed by the local office of the Iranian Ministry of Education to exclude political problems from their lessons and to refrain from voicing their political opinions in front of pupils. The service directive threatened teachers who fail to comply with legal consequences in the form of criminal proceedings. In recent weeks, there have been repeated protests and massive strikes by the teachers' union, with teachers demanding that their salaries within the multi-level pay system be brought into line with the salaries of university lecturers as well as the pensions currently being paid (cf. BN of 13.12.21). On 13.12.21, teachers went on strike, the largest teachers' strike to be held in the country's history. The strikers continue to demand an increase in the current monthly salary, as teachers are living way below the official poverty line. Another demand is the abolition of the usual temporary contracts of about 75,000 precariously employed teachers in the Iranian school system and their conversion into permanent contracts.

Protests following the death of an imprisoned poet who was critical of the regime

Protests took place at the funeral service at the holy shrine of Abdullah in Rey in the south of Tehran on 09.01.22 following the death of the imprisoned dissident poet Baktash Abtin on 08.01.22. The funeral procession and subsequent burial took place under the heavy presence of security forces. A crowd had already gathered in front of Sasan Hospital in Tehran after the poet's death was announced. Police dispersed the crowds to prevent protests. Baktash Actin who was 47 years old and was serving a six-year sentence in Evin prison, had been in poor health for some time and died from complications resulting from coronavirus which he had contracted for a second time. The Iranian Writers' Association accused the government and especially the judiciary of premeditated murder, as the prison authorities had withheld medical treatment from the prisoner for a long time and had admitted him to hospital too late. Baktash Abtin had been arrested in 2016 and sentenced to one year in prison in 2018 for anti-government propaganda. He was later sentenced to six years imprisonment on renewed propaganda charges and for "illegal assembly and collusion against national security".

Iraq

Aftermath of the massacre in Babil on 30.12.21

The events in Babil on 30.12.21 (cf. BN of 03.12.22) have strongly dominated the public debate in Iraq. After doubts arose over the security forces' version of events shortly after the event, various arrests were made around the turn of the year and in the first week of January after a detailed inquiry was launched. At least 14 people are currently in custody on suspicion of having deliberately passed on false information that triggered the operation, possibly for personal reasons. At present, it seems certain that the security forces acting on the basis of this information had wrongly assumed that the operation was a highly dangerous counter-terrorism operation; the wanted person, who had been accused of killing his family members in initial reports, does not appear to have been involved in the killing in any way. Several supervisors responsible for carrying out the operation have been suspended and their role is currently under investigation. The leaders of the local police force and intelligence services have been temporarily removed from their posts.

Attack in Baghdad

On 06.01.22, unknown individuals attacked the house of a member of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) in Baghdad, killing five members of his family and injuring him. The background is unclear.

Kazakhstan

Nationwide protests and riots, state of emergency imposed

What initially began as local protests in western Kazakhstan on 01.01.22 and 02.01.22 due to the increase in the price of liquefied petroleum gas spread within a few days into nationwide and sometimes violent mass protests against the state leadership. According to media reports, the protestors demanded, among other things, the resignation of the government and the withdrawal of former President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who is still considered to hold great political influence since his resignation in 2019. President Kassym-Shomart Tokayev declared a national two-week state of emergency with overnight curfews on 05.01.22 and sacked the government. In addition, on the same day he requested foreign military assistance from the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, which in addition to Kazakhstan includes the Russian Federation, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The state of emergency imposed has led to restrictions on public and business life, for instance with the activity of commercial banks temporarily suspended and air travel restricted, according to government sources. Internet outages were also reported intermittently. The violent clashes between protesters and security forces centred in particular on the former capital Almaty, where public buildings were occupied or set on fire, businesses were looted and exchanges of fire took place. The number of people killed and injured is still unclear; according to government figures as of 09.01.22, 146 people were killed and around 2,200 were injured across the country. According to the Ministry of the Interior, almost 8,000 people have been arrested, including high-ranking government officials such as the deposed head of the domestic intelligence service and former Prime Minister Karim Massimov, who has been accused of treason. On 07.01.22, President Tokayev declared that constitutional order had been largely restored in all regions of the country, and that he had also ordered the security forces to open fire on protesters.

Kenya

Several people killed in Lamu County

At least six people were killed and houses were looted and set on fire in attacks carried out in Lamu County on 03.01.22. Authorities suspect that the Islamist movement al-Shabaab is behind the attacks. Meanwhile, a 30-day overnight curfew was imposed in Lamu. On 07.01.22, four police officers were killed and others injured when they were hit by an improvised explosive device while on patrol in Lamu, according to media reports. The government has blamed al-Shabaab for the attack.

Lebanon

Economic situation

On 07.01.22, the Lebanese pound was trading at 30,000 to the US dollar on the black market (fixed exchange rate until 2019: 1,500 to one US dollar). The city of Arsal declared a fuel emergency as it is expected that many people will be without heating in view of the harsh temperatures expected between January and March 2022 and the 350% increase in price of fuel price. UNHCR and other NGOs are only able to provide funding for less than 30 percent of the needs for the Syrian refugee population.

On 08.10.22 there was a nationwide power outage after protesters stormed one of the country's largest substations. Large parts of the country currently only have one to three hours of electricity a day during normal operations. The country already experienced a nationwide blackout in October 2021 due to a lack of fuel, which was ended with the provision of military reserves.

Mali

ECOWAS imposes new sanctions

New sanctions against Mali were imposed with immediate effect by the West African Economic Community (ECOWAS) at a special summit in Accra on 09.01.22 due to military junta's announcement that elections would be delayed by five years (cf. BN of 03.01.22). This includes closing all borders with Mali and freezing the country's assets at the ECOWAS Central Bank. All non-vital trade relations will be interrupted and financial aid cut. It was also decided that all ambassadors of ECOWAS states would be withdrawn from Bamako. ECOWAS has urged the Malian military government to respect the planned election date of February 2022.

Mexico

Ten people killed in Zacatecas, nine in Veracruz

On 06.01.22, a car with ten bodies inside was found parked in front of the governor's palace in the capital Zacatecas, Zacatecas state, whose deaths are presumed to be the result of a violent crime. Two suspects have been arrested. Acts of violence have increased significantly since November 2021 in the central Mexican state, where the Jalisco Nueva Generación cartel, the Los Talibanes cartel and the Sinaloa cartel are fighting for supremacy over illegal trades and power (cf. BN of 06.12.21). In addition to members of civil society, violent crimes also repeatedly involve members of the police, as with the abduction of a police chief and two police officers and their subsequent murder in the city of Loreto in November 2021. Nine bodies were also found on a highway in Isla, in the south of the state on 07.01.22, according to the Secretariat of Public Security of the State of Veracruz (SSP). An investigation has been launched.

Migration: visa requirement for Venezuelan nationals

On 06.01.22, the Ministry of the Interior announced in the official gazette that, according to a new regulation, a visa will be mandatory for Venezuelan citizens wishing to enter Mexican territory. This measure is intended to reduce the smuggling of migrants to the USA.

Montenegro

Rapid increase in the number of COVID-19 cases

According to a statement issued by the Institute for Public Health on 04.01.22, the number of new COVID-19 infections has increased by 450 % within two weeks; the situation in the country is therefore classified as serious. Due to the further increase over the turn of the year and during the Orthodox Christmas period predicted in the context of the anticipated omicron wave, the head of the institute, Igor Galic, has urged people to celebrate Christmas at home and to avoid large public gatherings. At the beginning of the year, Montenegro had by far the highest rate of coronavirus in the Western Balkans region, with more than 28,000 active COVID-19 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. A ban on public gatherings and celebrations, the closure of restaurants and cafés after 10 p.m.,

compulsory proof of vaccination when entering shopping centres, shops and religious buildings, and proof of a negative PCR test when entering the country from abroad currently remain in force.

Morocco

Sexual harassment at universities

On 28.12.21, dozens of female students protested in Oujda against sexual harassment at universities. One case at the university in Tangier made headlines on 30.12.21, and another case at Hassan I University in Settat in September 2021. Here, four professors were charged with incitement to corruption, gender discrimination, violence against women and one professor was charged with indecent assault. Students affected can file anonymous reports under the hashtag #metooUniv.

Myanmar

Clashes in Sagaing Region and in Chin, Kayah, Kayin und Shan States

Returning locals discovered the dead bodies of 20 civilians in Natchaung (Kalay Township, Sagaing Region) where clashes erupted between local People's Defence Forces (PDF) and the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) on 22.12.21. Fighting also took place in villages in the municipalities of Taze, Wetlet and Indaw in the Sagaing region between 02.01.22 and 04.01.22. In Wetlet and Indaw, the Tatmadaw used helicopters to drop grenades and also bombs on Indaw. At least 15 people died in Indaw and around 1,000 people fled.

On 03.01.22, the Tatmadaw burnt down over 40 houses and two churches in Thantlang (Chin State). On the same day, the Chinland Defence Force (CDF) carried out an attack on a military base in Matupi, resulting in fighting that lasted all day. On 06.01.22, heavy fighting once again erupted between the CDF and Tatmadaw in Matupi, and further clashes occurred in Falam on the same day, also involving the Kalay PDF.

In Hpruso Township (Kayah State), where junta soldiers killed at least 35 civilians on 24.12.21 (cf. BN of 03.01.22), fighting reportedly broke out between the Tatmadaw and an alliance of the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) and the Karenni Army (KA) on 31.12.21. Armed clashes also took place in Demoso on 31.12.21 and 01.01.22. A total of at least 35 junta soldiers and two members of the resistance alliance were reportedly killed in the fighting. On 07.01.22, over 1,000 civilians fled armed clashes between the KNDF and Tatmadaw in Loikaw. Four civilians and two KNDF members were killed. Between 19.05.21 and 31.12.21, KNDF sources say about 130 clashes took place between the Tatmadaw and resistance forces in Kayah. According to the Karenni Human Rights Group, at least 146 civilians have been killed by junta forces in the region since the military coup on 01.02.21.

On 04.01.22, violence between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Tatmadaw escalated again near Lay Kay Kaw town (Myawaddy Township, Kayin State). Junta forces fired 30 artillery shells at residential houses, which they subsequently looted.

Several hours of fighting broke out between the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA) and the Tatmadaw near Mongko (northern Shan State) on 03.01.22. The latter also clashed with the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) in Namkham (also Shan State) on 05.01.22. Junta soldiers were reportedly killed and civilians injured.

Poverty

According to a report issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 14.4 million people - a good quarter of the population - are expected to be in need of humanitarian aid in 2022. The report cites price increases for food and petrol as the main reason, which in turn have been caused by a real shortage of goods as a result of strikes, among other things, and the increasing depreciation of the kyat. Almost half of the population is living in poverty as a result of the economic and political developments of 2021.

Further sentence for Aung San Suu Kyi

On 10.01.22, a court in Naypyidaw sentenced ousted de facto head of government Aung San Suu Kyi to another four years in prison for illegally importing and possessing walkie-talkies and for violating coronavirus restrictions. Suu Kyi had already been sentenced to four years imprisonment on 06.12.21 for inciting sedition and violating coronavirus rules. Shortly afterwards, the junta halved the sentence and commuted it to house arrest (cf. BN of

06.12.21 and 13.12.21). Aung San Suu Kyi faces additional charges, including corruption and violation of the Official Secrets Act.

Nicaragua

Prison conditions of political prisoners

In a statement issued during a video conference, relatives of political prisoners once again pointed out the significantly deteriorating physical and mental health of political prisoners, especially the elderly detainees José Pallais, Violeta Granera, Mauricio Díaz and Edgar Parrales following visits made between 30.12.21 and 02.01.22 and demanded their release. In addition, a lawyer named at least 38 torture methods to which the political prisoners were repeatedly subjected, in a report that was also submitted.

Nigeria

Many killed in renewed attacks in Zamfara State

According to various media reports, scores of people were killed in attacks carried out by so-called bandits on several villages in Zamfara State on 05.01.22 and 06.01.22. The Zamfara Government Information Officer, Ibrahim Dosara, had told media representatives that 36 people had been killed in Bukkuyum Local Government Area (LGA) and 22 in Anka LGA. He denied claims by local residents that 200 or more people had died in the attacks. One resident said that 154 people had been buried, including members of a vigilante group who had confronted the assailants. The armed vigilantes arrived on motorbikes and then opened fire indiscriminately at the people present, set fire to buildings and stole livestock. 10,000 people have been displaced. The raids were in response to air strikes carried out by the Nigerian armed forces on hideouts of the so-called bandits earlier the same week. According to the military, more than 100 of the so-called bandits, including two of their leaders, were killed in air strikes in the east of the state on 03.01.22.

In the north-western Zamfara State, there has been an increase in deadly attacks perpetrated by so-called bandits in recent months (cf. BN of 03.01.22).

Kidnap victims released

According to media reports, numerous hostages in several northern states of the country have been released. On 08.01.22, thirty-one people arrived in the capital of the north-western state of Kebbi, Birnin Yauri, after being freed. They were 30 students and a teacher at the Federal Government College Yauri, who had been held in captivity since their abduction in June 2021 (cf. BN of 21.06.21). On 05.01.22, twenty-eight hostages were reportedly released from Rafi Local Government Area (LGA) in north-central Niger State after relatives paid a ransom of over 18 million naira. The abducted victims had allegedly been held in captivity for around 100 days. On 03.01.22, according to the Zamfara State Police Commissioner, Ayuba Elkana, 98 people had been freed in military operations in Shinkafi and Tsafe LGAs, including seven pregnant women and numerous children aged between two months and seven years. The kidnap victims had been in captivity for more than two months after being abducted from remote communities in Zamfara and Sokoto States. In Zamfara State, according to media reports, 21 school children from an Almajiri school were freed from the hands of their kidnapers by the police shortly after being abducted by so-called bandits from vehicles on a road in Tsafe LGA.

Government refers to so-called bandits as terrorists

The Nigerian government has officially designated criminal groups, also called bandits, as terrorists, according to media reports. In an official gazette dated 05.01.22, the actions of these groups, which are blamed for mass kidnappings, cattle rustling and destruction of property, among other things, had been described as "acts of terrorism and illegality". The designation will lead to tougher sanctions being imposed against the so-called bandits, their supporters and informants under the Terrorism Prevention Act, it said.

There have been a string of deadly robberies and kidnappings in the north-western and north-central states recently (cf. BN of 03.01.22).

North Macedonia

Petition for resignation submitted by Prime Minister Zaev

According to media reports, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev officially tendered his resignation on 22.12.21, having already announced plans to step down following his party, the Social Democratic League of Macedonia's (SDSM), defeat in the local elections in early November 2021. In the weeks since the election defeat, Zaev had ensured there was a smooth transfer of power among the government leaders and party chairmen and had managed to avoid a change of government by stabilising his government majority (cf. BN of 13.12.21). The change at the top of the SDSM had already taken place in December 2021 with the election of the former deputy finance minister and Zaev's preferred candidate, Dimitar Kovacevski. Parliament now has to confirm Kovacevski as prime minister, which is basically a foregone conclusion despite the narrow majority.

Pakistan

Soldier kills himself and three other soldiers

On 09.01.22, a soldier committed suicide after shooting dead three fellow Pakistani soldiers in the tribal district of Khyber in north-west Pakistan. No official statements were issued. According to military sources, it was an internal matter. According to media reports, the incident took place at a so-called deradicalisation facility run by the military. Fighters of radical Islamic groups such as the Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) are detained there.

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Israel: many killed as a result of organised crime

According to Abraham Initiatives, a Jewish-Arab organisation working for equal rights for Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel, 126 Arabs in Israel died in the context of violent incidents and crime in 2021.

The crime rate in some Arab neighbourhoods has been rising for several years (cf. BN of 27.09.21). Critics and those affected are accusing the police and the Israeli authorities of not having prevented the rise in organised crime through inaction and neglect of these neighbourhoods. The government under Naftali Bennett has pledged to crack down on organised crime.

On 06.01.22, a four-year-old boy died in a playground in the village of Bir al-Maksur from a bullet believed to have been fired in a dispute between several people at a nearby construction site. Four suspects were arrested.

On the same day, a man was killed in the town of Lod which has a large Arab community, presumably in a shootout between two criminal gangs.

Palestinian prisoner ends hunger strike after being assured of his release

On 04.01.22 it was announced that a Palestinian prisoner who has been on hunger strike for 141 days in an Israeli prison would break his fast. The man was protesting against the concept of administrative detention to which he is subject. He is a member of the militant group Islamic Jihad and has been in Israeli custody without charge since October 2020 (cf. BN of 15.11.21). The Israeli authorities have assured him that he will be released in a few weeks.

West Bank: one person killed during arrest operation in the West Bank

On 06.01.22, Israeli forces carried out an operation to arrest suspects in Nablus, in the north of the West Bank. According to the military, armed persons opened fire on military personnel, who shot and killed one of the gunmen. The suspect, the target of the arrest, was also taken into custody.

Republic of Congo

Torture by police officers

According to press reports, four police officers who have been charged with using torture against suspected juvenile offenders in the capital Brazzaville in a video that went viral are each facing criminal proceedings for assault and

battery. According to the NGO Centre of Action for Development (Centre d'actions pour le développement (CAD)), one of the youths died as a result of the torture. CAD is calling for a requalification for murder.

Senegal

Bill rejected

The National Assembly decided on 05.01.22 to further criminalise homosexuality in relation to the bill introduced on 22.12.21. The bill, supported by about a dozen MPs, would have increased the maximum prison sentence for homosexuality from the current five to ten years. Members of President Macky Sall's coalition had already stated in advance that they considered the measure to be unnecessary, and on 05.01.22 it was formally rejected by a majority. The Office of the National Assembly said that President Sall had made it clear that homosexuality would not be legalised and was already severely punished by the Penal Code.

Somalia

Agreement to hold elections

After repeated delays (cf. BN of 02.08.21 and 08.11.21), Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble and state leaders agreed on 09.01.22, following several days of talks, to hold lower house parliamentary elections before 25.02.22.

Sudan

Protests continue

After former Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok announced his resignation on 02.01.22 (cf. BN of 03.01.22), the Chairman of the Sovereignty Council, General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, stated on 04.01.22 that the doors were open for all political forces to enter into a dialogue on ending the ongoing political crisis. Nevertheless, protests against the military, against the October 2021 coup and in favour of a purely civilian government continued on 06.01.22. According to the security forces, two protesters were killed and 54 members of the security forces were injured during the renewed protest that took place in the capital Khartoum. Furthermore, 60 arrests were made for violence against security forces. As in previous protests, communication and internet services were blocked, main roads were closed and military units were deployed to protect the army headquarters and the presidential palace. Further protests took place in Khartoum on 09.01.22, in the course of which a young man was killed. Other demonstrations took place in the sister city of Khartoum, Omdurman, and in Wad Madani in the south of the country. While according to the attending doctors, a youth demonstrator died on 09.01.22 as a result of a gunshot wound he sustained during the demonstration held on 06.01.22, security forces repeatedly denied using live ammunition. Doctors wearing white coats also took part in the recent demonstrations to protest against attacks carried out by security forces on hospitals. The Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors also said it would send a memorandum to the UN listing all the attacks on hospitals.

Meanwhile, the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), a leading organisation of the current protest movement, rejected the talks planned by the UN for 10.01.22. The SPA said it would not negotiate or compromise with the military. Furthermore, it strictly rejects the participation of the military in the government. By contrast, the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) - another key actor in the protests - said they had not received any details about the planned UN talks.

Syria

Central Syria: at least five people killed in attack on military transport bus

The state news agency SANA reported that an attack had taken place on a highway through central Syria near the ancient oasis city of Palmyra on 03.01.22. Five soldiers were killed and 20 others were injured in the attack, it said. According to the report, armed militants first fired rockets at the bus and then followed it with gunfire from an anti-aircraft gun. A government spokesperson has blamed ISIS for the attack.

The pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also reported on the attack carried out by suspected ISIS fighters but said that at least nine soldiers had been killed. According to the report, members of militias loyal to the government were also among the soldiers.

Turkey

Proceedings to lift the MPs' immunity

On 04.01.21, the Office of the Speaker of the Parliament published 40 proceedings seeking to have the legislative immunity of 28 opposition MPs lifted, including 24 MPs of the People's Democratic Party (HDP). The files were handed over to the joint committee formed by members of the Joint Constitution and Justice Committee of Parliament.

Protest against prison conditions for prisoners

On 04.01.22, several families of prisoners from Amed, Van, Şırnak, Batman, Mardin, Yüksekova, Siirt, Çukurova and İstanbul demonstrated in Ankara against the prison conditions for prisoners who are ill. The protestors demand the release of ill prisoners and those who have been denied release despite having served their sentences. They issued a press statement in front of a police barricade. The police then used force against the protestors, several of whom were arrested.

Bogazici students released from pre-trial detention

On 07.01.22, a Turkish court decided to release from prison two students who had taken part in protests outside Bogazici University in Istanbul. The protests began in 2021 after President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan appointed Melih Bulu rector. In August 2021, Bulu was replaced by Naci İnci. The protests soon spread to other cities and led to the brief detention of hundreds of people. Fourteen students were arrested in October 2021 for their participation in the protests.

Former HDP MP released

On 07.01.22, former Peoples' Democratic Party MP Abdullah Zeydan was released from prison after serving five years in an ongoing trial after an appeals court overturned the lower court's verdict. The court in Diyarbakır is conducting a retrial after the Supreme Court of Appeal recently overturned a prison sentence of eight years and 45 days for supporting a terrorist organisation and spreading terrorist propaganda. Zeydan had been arrested in November 2016 along with other politicians, including the then co-chairs of the HDP, Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ.

Suspected Gülen members arrested

At least 78 people were detained in raids carried out in several provinces on 04.01.22 over alleged links with the Gülen movement. Security forces arrested 15 suspects in an operation carried out in Istanbul. Separately, the Ankara prosecutor's office issued arrest warrants for 99 suspects, 55 of whom were reportedly arrested, as part of an investigation into the group's networks in the gendarmerie. In addition, eight suspects were arrested in other provinces.

Uganda

Government critic arrested

Writer and government critic Kakwenza Rukirabhaija was arrested by armed personnel in plain clothes on 28.12.21, according to media reports. Rukirabhaija had previously insulted President Yoweri Kaguta Tibuhabwe Museveni and his son Muhoozi Kainerugaba on social media. His lawyer reported that he was being held by police intelligence in a suburb of Kampala and was being subjected to torture. At his trial on 03.01.22, which took place in Rukirabhaija's absence, he was acquitted but remains in custody. The police denied the allegation of torture. Rukirabhaija is being held in custody for the third time in two years.

USA / Haiti

Charges filed for the assassination of the former Haitian President

On 04.01.22, US authorities filed charges against Colombian national Mario Antonio Palacios "for conspiracy to commit murder or kidnapping outside the United States in connection with the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse" (cf. BN of 12.07.21). He was arrested in Jamaica in October 2021 for illegal entry and was supposed to be deported from there to Colombia on 03.01.22. Instead, during a stopover in Panama, he was presumably asked to fly from there to the USA, which had issued a red alert on him through Interpol. He appeared for a preliminary hearing at the US District Court in Miami on 04.01.22. Although numerous other suspects and defendants in connection with the assassination of the former president are also being detained in Haiti, the investigation there continues and no official charges have yet been filed against any individual.

Venezuela

Result of regional elections in Barinas

On 09.01.22, the re-election for the governorship in Barinas State took place, which the pro-government Supreme Court (TSJ) had ordered on 29.11.21 (cf. BN of 06.12.21). According to the regional electoral authority (Oficina Regional Electoral del Estado Barinas), the opposition candidate Sergió Garrido of the Democratic Unity Table (Mesa de la Unidad Democrática, (MUD)) won with over 55% against the candidate of the ruling Unified Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), Jorge Arreaza, after 97.40% of the votes were counted.

Shootout in Barrancas del Orinoco

According to the director of the Scientific, Penal, and Criminal Investigation Service Corps, (Cuerpo de Investigaciones Científicas, Penales y Criminalísticas (CICPC)), at least seven people were killed in a shootout that took place in the municipality of Barrancas del Orinoco in the state of Monagas on 01.01.22. The local deputy Hernández and representatives of the NGO Kapé Kapé speak of clashes between different armed para-state groups.

Extrajudicial killings by state security forces in December 2021

According to a report issued by the NGO Control Ciudadano on 06.01.22, a total of 51 people were killed by state security forces and members of the armed forces, often in mixed police and military commissions, in December 2021. While according to official government statements, the majority of the killings involved clashes with criminals during security operations, the NGO instead speaks of extrajudicial killings, most of which occurred in the states of Miranda and Carabobo (eleven cases respectively), Zulia (eight) and Trujillo (seven). The NGO also criticises the lack of investigation and judicial processing of these cases, although the majority of them allegedly bear all the hallmarks of extrajudicial killings.

Yemen

UN cuts further aid programmes for Yemen

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced it would be suspending or cutting aid programmes for Yemen on 04.01.22 owing to a lack of funding. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) already announced a reduction of food rations at the end of December 2021 for the same reason (cf. BN of 03.01.22).

Clashes in Shabwah

On 05.01.22, the Yemeni government announced that the anti-Houthi coalition had retaken the Bayhan district and large parts of the Usailan district from the Houthis in Shabwah Governorate. The oil and gas-rich Governorates of Marib and Shabwah are among the main arenas of fighting between the Houthis and the anti-Houthi coalition. Dozens of fighters from both sides have already been killed in Shabwah since the turn of the year.

Air strikes in Sanaa

On 05.01.22, the anti-Houthi coalition announced that it had carried out air strikes against targets in the capital Sanaa, hitting military targets. The air strikes were justified with previous drone attacks carried out by the Houthis on Saudi territory and with the capture of a ship flying the flag of the United Arab Emirates on 03.01.22 (cf. BN of 03.01.22). The Houthis have since contradicted the coalition's account that the ship was carrying medical equipment. According to the Houthis, the ship's cargo consisted of military equipment.

Arms supplies from Iran

According to the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), the UN has concluded in a classified report that the arms shipment to Yemen recently seized by the US Navy in the Persian Gulf (cf. BN of 13.12.21) originated from Iran. According to the WSJ, the UN assumes that Iran regularly supplies weapons to Yemen. The USA and Saudi Arabia have been accusing Iran for some time of violating the arms embargo against the Houthis since 2015.

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