



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

31 January 2022

Afghanistan

Security situation

Clashes erupted between the Taliban and the National Resistance Front (NWF) in the Khost district of Baghlan province on 24.01.22 and 25.01.22. According to unconfirmed statements by a representative of the NWF, 20 Taliban fighters and six Resistance Front fighters were killed. The fighting allegedly lasted three days and the Taliban took family members of the resistance fighters hostage in retaliation for the deaths of the Taliban fighters. The NWF's foreign policy spokesperson announced that an offensive against the Taliban would be launched as soon as winter ends. The NWF is fighting the Taliban in Baghlan, Balkh, Faryab and Badakhshan provinces. On 25.01.22, it was reported that there were a number of unsolved murder cases in Faryab province. On 29.01.22, it was reported that another Taliban commander, Tajike Qari Wakil, had been arrested in the midst of the Taliban's internal power struggle between Uzbeks and Pashtuns in Mazar-e Sharif. There are reports on social media that the Taliban are allocating land in the northern provinces that originally belonged to Turkmen or Uzbeks to Kuchi nomads. On 28.01.22, two former soldiers were killed by unknown individuals in Kunduz province. The Taliban have reportedly arrested the suspects. The crime rate is said to have risen recently in the province.

Government leadership

A delegation led by Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi was in Oslo for talks from 23.01.22 to 25.01.22 where they met with representatives of Afghan civil society (women's rights activists, politicians and a journalist). The Taliban agreed to investigate the case of two missing women's rights activists, but at the same time said they had the right to arrest people to "protect people from harm". The Taliban delegation also met diplomatic representatives of the USA, the EU and Germany, among others. The humanitarian situation and the human rights situation in Afghanistan were discussed. The Taliban promised to give girls access to secondary schools in the new school year (from the end of March 2022). The international representatives stressed that the meeting was not a step towards diplomatic recognition of the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan. According to reports, Taliban intelligence chief Maulavi Mehdi Mujahid of Bamyan province, an ethnic Hazara, has been replaced by Uzbek Taliban commander Qari Bilal. Mujahid is to be transferred to Kabul; he had recently spoken out publicly in favour of women's education.

The Taliban banned a press conference on "Freedom of the Press in Afghanistan" in Kabul on 26.01.22. According to reports, NWF leader Ahmad Masoud and the leader of the Jamiat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan party, Selahuddin Rabbani, are travelling to Moscow on 27.01.22 to meet Taliban representatives there. Most recently, NWF leaders Ahmad Massoud and warlord Ismail Khan in Iran (acting as mediators) had met with the Taliban. On 24.01.22, the Taliban announced that they were setting up a court to prosecute drug offences. On 25.01.22, they announced that they had established an authority for the collection and administration of ushr (tax on land ownership) and zakat (property tax).

Economic and humanitarian situation

On 26.01.22, the UN Security Council addressed the situation in Afghanistan as part of the extended mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). UNAMA Chairperson Deborah Lyons and UN Secretary-General António Guterres reiterated the urgent need to support the Afghan economy. However, the Taliban are now expected to show clear signs and actions demonstrating to the international community that they will follow through on their promises (e.g. women's rights). There are a few positive signs (financial sustainability of the state, Oslo negotiations) as well as some concerning signs (arrests, disappearance of women human rights activists). Guterres said that despite the general amnesty, more than 100 people from the former government had been killed by the Taliban since takeover. During the conference, the UN launched the Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF) in Kabul, which will coordinate all UN relief operations in the country and will need a total of US\$ 8 billion for 2022 (this already includes the US\$ 4.4 billion Humanitarian Response Plan). Another US\$ 3.6 billion is still being sought to ensure the survival of 22 million people and to pay for education and the healthcare system in 2022.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has pledged US\$ 405 million for projects implemented by UN agencies in Afghanistan. The WHO once again pointed out the catastrophic state of the Afghan healthcare system and has called on international donors to support it. The Taliban Ministry of Health is also appealing for international support. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) is distributing wheat seeds to more than one million farmers to counter the consequences of the drought in 2021. According to a report issued on 25.01.22, the Taliban are misusing aid shipments to pay off members of their "Food for Work" programme. According to a report published in the daily newspaper Die Welt on 27.01.22, another 30,000 Afghans (local workers, artists, journalists, scientists) are to be evacuated by the Federal Republic of Germany. At the beginning of January 2022, about 20,000 Afghans were still waiting on their promised departure. According to a judicial order in the USA, the U.S. Department of Justice must decide on the release of the frozen reserves by 11.02.22. The current Taliban Minister of Health urged the Afghan population on 29.01.22, to get vaccinated against COVID-19. According to Save the Children, 135 children died of pneumonia or malnutrition in Afghanistan in December 2021.

Protests / arrests / violence against civilians

Women's protests continue. On 24.01.22, women in Daikundi protested against ethnic discrimination in the distribution of humanitarian aid, pointing out that single women in particular had no access to aid. On 26.01.22, women in Kabul had protested against a Taliban poster campaign saying they should wear the veil (burqa, hijab). Human Rights Watch published a report on 26.01.22 in which the organisation points to increased violence (beatings, rapes) by the Taliban against LGBTIQ persons. For many of the women interviewed, however, unemployment and the resulting lack of food is an even bigger problem. Girls over the age of twelve have not been to school for more than 130 days, according a statement issued by Amnesty International on 25.01.22.

Benin

People killed in conflict sparked by sect

On 29.01.22, eight people, including two police officers, died in Kogandji (municipality of Savalou in the Collines Department) during clashes that erupted between members of a sect called the Azael Church (Église Azael, also: Azael La Lumière, Azael Awouignan) and the police. According to the police, this happened during an investigation into a rape or physical assault of a woman. A search is underway for several of the sect's leaders. The sect is said to announce the end of the world and call on its followers to sell all their possessions. The sect reportedly caused discontent among the local population, also for seizing peasants' crops.

Burkina Faso

Military coup

A military coup began on 23.01.22 with shootings in several barracks in the country (cf. BN of 24.01.22). The coup organisers arrested President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré in the capital Ouagadougou on 24.01.22, and surrounded the building of the national broadcaster which published a letter signed by President Roch Marc Kaboré,

announcing his resignation. A spokesperson for the coup organisers, Captain Sidsoré Kader Ouedraogo, announced on state television flanked by other military personnel that the hitherto unknown Patriotic Movement for Preservation and Restoration (Mouvement patriotique pour la sauvegarde et la restauration, (MPSR)) had seized power. The move was justified by the deteriorating security situation and insufficient government action to contain it. According to a statement read out by the spokesperson, the commander of the 3rd Military Region, Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, the MPSR wants to propose a roadmap for the return to a universally accepted constitutional order within a reasonable period of time. The military also imposed a nationwide night-time curfew from 9:00 pm to 05:00 am. The government and the National Assembly were dissolved and the constitution was suspended. The country's borders were to remain closed for at least four days. However, the air borders were reopened on 25.01.22, and land borders remain closed except for the transport of certain goods. Damiba met the members of the deposed government on 26.01.22 and asked them not to leave the country without permission. On 27.01.22, military leaders met with trade union leaders. In a first public speech delivered on 27.01.22, Damiba said in a television broadcast that he would seek a return to constitutional order when the conditions are right. He said he would meet with representatives of society to discuss a roadmap for reform.

According to the coup organisers, the seizure of power took place without bloodshed. However, news media reported that vehicles belonging to the President's entourage were riddled with bullets. The whereabouts of President Kaboré were not known to begin with. According to some reports, he was initially taken to a barracks in the capital. On 26.01.22, his party, the People's Movement for Progress (Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès (MPP)) reportedly said that he was well and under house arrest in the custody of the military. Kaboré has not appeared in public since the coup. Before the coup was announced, Kaboré's account on Twitter called on the military involved in the coup to lay down their arms and engage in a dialogue. The deposed Prime Minister Lassina Zerbo is also said to have been detained by the coup organisers.

The situation is calm. The coup is being received positively, at least by some sections of the population. On 24.01.22 and 25.01.22, protesters in Ouagadougou showed their support for the new military rulers. Several Western countries, the EU, the UN and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have condemned the coup and demanded the release of the deposed president. ECOWAS suspended Burkina Faso's membership on 28.01.22.

Background

Discontent in the military, which is inadequately equipped to fight extremists, has grown recently, not least in view of several incidents in which the extremists inflicted heavy losses on the security forces (cf. BN of 22.11.21 and 03.01.22). The military, members of the opposition and protestors have recently stepped up their calls for President Kaboré, who also took over as defence minister in June 2021, to resign. Kaboré responded in December 2021 by reshuffling the military leadership. He also accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Christophe Joseph Marie Dabiré, after which a new government was formed under Prime Minister Lassina Zerbo on 13.12.21 (cf. BN of 13.12.21 and 20.12.21). Since 08.01.22, several military personnel and civilians have been arrested for alleged coup plots (cf. BN of 17.01.22).

Burkina Faso, like its neighbouring countries Mali and Niger, is affected by violence perpetrated by extremist groups that are active locally and across borders, some of which have close ties with ISIS and al-Qaeda. Since 2015, these groups have been carrying out attacks in Burkina Faso and expanding their spheres of influence in the country. Especially the north and east, but also areas in the west and south of Burkina Faso are now affected by violence. First incidents in Benin and Togo (cf. BN of 15.11.21 and 10.01.22) seem to confirm fears of observers that the extremists could expand their activities to the neighbouring West African coastal countries in the south.

Between the end of 2018 and the end of 2021, the number of people internally displaced by the further deteriorating security situation rose from 47,000 to more than 1.5 million, most in the Sahel and Centre-Nord regions, as indicated by UN figures. According to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), some 2,500 people have died in violent incidents since January 2021 alone. Extreme poverty, the COVID-19 pandemic and worsening effects of the climate crisis are contributing to a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation. Ranked 182 out of 189 in the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Burkina Faso is one of the countries in the lowest human development category.

Extremists killed

In a statement released on 30.01.22, the Chief of Staff of the French Army said nearly 60 members of various extremist groups had been neutralised or killed in four joint engagements carried out by Burkinabe forces and French units of Operation Barkhane in the Sahel region on the border with Mali between 16.01.22 and 23.01.22.

Colombia

Three injured in attack in Cali, National Ombudsman's Office warns of increase in violence in the city

According to the Security Secretary, Carlos Soler, two police officers and one civilian were injured in an explosion during an attack on a police patrol in Cali on 28.01.22.

On 14.01.22, the **National Ombudsman's Office** had already published an official warning (alerta temprana) against the spread of violence in the capital of Valle del Cauca, Cali. It is not just the National Liberation Army (ELN) and various FARC dissident groups that are wrangling for influence, but also various narco-military actors, in the south-western province. The mayor of Cali, Jorge Iván Ospina, blames the strategic location and relative proximity to large coca crops and marijuana cultivation areas for the presence of a large number of armed groups in the city. In recent weeks, the police and military presence has been stepped up in the rural areas of the region as well as in Cali.

Attack in Caquetá: two policemen killed

According to the National Police, at least two policemen were killed when an IED exploded and at least four others were injured in an attack perpetrated on 29.01.22 against the convoy of the Governor of Caquetá, Arnulfo Gasca, near the municipality of Solano. According to initial media reports, FARC dissidents were responsible for the attack.

FARC dissidents: Euclides España (alias Jhonnier) killed by state security forces

On 24.01.22, President Ivan Duque announced that one of the leaders of the FARC dissidents operating in the south-west of the country, Euclides España (alias Jhonnier), had been killed in a joint operation carried out by the military, the National Police and the Public Prosecutor's Office in the municipality of Tacueyó in the province of Cauca. He said Jhonnier, as leader of the splinter group Comando Coordinador de Occidente, had been responsible for various sub-groups that have close links to Gentil Duarte and Iván Mordisco and a strong presence in the Cauca and Nariño regions.

Three attacks on military bases; attack against convoy of the UN verification mission

On 26.01.22 and 27.01.22, three IED attacks took place against state military bases in different provinces of the country. On 27.01.22, the ELN claimed responsibility for the attacks in which one soldier was killed and more than 20 others were injured. Whereas only one person was killed and one person was injured in the attack carried out on the Chiriguaná military base in the northern province of Cesar, two people were seriously injured and 18 sustained minor injuries in four explosions at the Aguachica military base in the same province. One soldier was injured in the third attack carried out against the armed forces base in Ocaña, Norte de Santander. Furthermore, police stations in Pailitas, Cesar and in Convención, Norte de Santander were attacked the same morning. According to Defence Minister Diego Molano, one person was slightly injured; his ministry also blamed the ELN for the attacks. In addition, attacks were carried out against the police in the municipality of Remedios in Antioquia as well as in Bucalagrande and Tuluá in Valle del Cauca.

On 27.01.22, three vehicles belonging to the UN Verification Mission in Guaviare province were also attacked by masked, armed unknown assailants. Two vehicles were torched, the vehicle occupants, who had previously been ordered to leave the cars, remained unharmed. In this context, the UN Verification Mission condemned the ongoing violence in the areas that are actually designated for the implementation of the FARC peace agreement.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Another protest violently dispersed; LUCHA activists released

According to Radio Okapi created by the UN, security and police forces used excessive force against protesters from various civil society groups in the city of Beni on 24.01.22, some of whom responded by throwing stones and engaging in vandalism. In the course of the clashes, tear gas and live ammunition were used against the protesters.

The number of potential casualties is not known. Thirty-four people were arrested and one protestor who is said to have belonged to the civil movement Struggle for Change (Lutte pour le changement (LUCHA)) was killed. The protestors were demonstrating against the state of siege that has been in force since the beginning of May 2021 in the two provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, both of which are affected by considerable militia violence, and which they consider to be ineffective. Considerable tension simmered between the security forces and the civil society groups in the following days until 27.01.21. Sounds of gunfire were once again heard in the city after civil society groups re-attempted to protest against the state of siege on 26.01.22. Several civil society organisations and the youth parliament of the city of Beni had demanded the release of protestors and the launch of an independent inquiry into the case of the protestor who had been killed. In January 2022, there have already been several reports of injuries, arrests and deaths in connection with the dispersal of various demonstrations (cf. BN. of 03.01.22, 10.01.22 and 24.01.22).

Okapi reported on 27.01.22 that 12 LUCHA members who had been arrested on 11.11.21 during a protest against a further extension of the state of siege in the city of Beni and who had been detained since then, had been released due to a lack of criminal charges.

UNJHRO: fewer human rights violations nationwide in the reporting year 2021

Referring to the annual report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in DRC (UNJHRO) presented on 27.01.22, Okapi reported on 27.01.22 that UNJHRO documented 6,989 human rights violations across the country in the reporting year 2021. This represents a decrease of 12% compared to the increase of 21% in the reporting year 2020. Sixty percent of all documented human rights violations were attributable to the non-state armed groups operating in the conflict provinces (not specified by Okapi) in the reporting year 2021. Summary executions of at least 2,024 civilians, including 439 women, had reportedly occurred in these conflict-ridden provinces.

Egypt / Eritrea

HRW: forced returns of Eritrean asylum seekers

In its recently published report, the human rights organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) criticises the deportation of Eritrean asylum seekers by the Egyptian authorities without granting them access to the asylum system or UNHCR. According to the report, Egypt allegedly forced at least seven Eritrean asylum seekers to return to Eritrea in October and November 2021, and 24 more on 24.12.21 without assessing the grounds for asylum or protection. According to UN human rights experts, Eritrean nationals may be subjected to torture, ill-treatment and enforced disappearances by local authorities upon return to their home country.

2,337 prisoners release as part of an amnesty

To mark Egypt's 70th annual Police Day, the Ministry of Interior announced on 26.01.21 that it would release more than 2,330 prisoners following a presidential amnesty.

Ten members of the Muslim Brotherhood sentenced to death

On 30.01.22, a court sentenced ten members of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has been outlawed since 2013, to death. They are alleged to have coordinated and planned attacks on the police in 2015. Before the court reconvenes in June 2022 to finally confirm the sentences, and before they can be challenged, the verdicts will be submitted to Egypt's Grand Mufti, the highest Islamic legal authority, for review - a mere formality in death penalty cases.

Ethiopia

Humanitarian situation in Tigray

A report published by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) on 28.01.22 states that 4.6 million inhabitants, or about 83% of the population in Tigray, are food-insecure. Although the situation is better in the neighbouring regions of Amhara and Afar, there are also supply problems in the regions bordering Tigray. In northern Ethiopia, around nine million people now need humanitarian food assistance. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has said that the lack of fuel is rendering the distribution of humanitarian aid and services almost impossible.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports that medical supplies have been brought to Mekelle, the capital of Tigray, for the first time in over four months. A plane carrying urgently needed medicines and equipment landed there on 26.01.22, with more flights to follow.

TPLF launches new offensive

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) has announced that it launched a new military attack in the regional state of Afar on 24.01.22. The reason given for the operation in the Killbet Rasu Zone (Zone 2) was the "systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid to the population in Tigray". In addition, they say Afar militias carried out raids in eastern Tigray. Notwithstanding this, the TPLF has said that in principle, it remains willing to engage in talks in order to bring the conflict to an end.

Ethiopia lifts state of emergency

Despite the renewed violence in Afar, the Ethiopian parliament decided on 26.01.22 to end the six-month nationwide state of emergency imposed in November 2021 ahead of its expiration (cf. BN of 08.11.21). A government spokesperson pointed out that the TPLF militias had evacuated their positions in Amhara and Afar and retreated to Tigray, so that there was no longer an immediate threat to the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

Guatemala

30 years' imprisonment for crimes against humanity

On 24.01.22, five former paramilitaries were sentenced to 30 years in prison for crimes against humanity committed during the civil war in the 1980s. The court considered it proven that the defendants had systematically raped several indigenous women as a war tactic. Activists described the sentence as historic and ground-breaking for the late processing of war crimes committed during the 36-year civil war that ended in 1996. More than 80% of the approximately 200,000 people disappeared or killed during this internal conflict were members of the indigenous Mayan population, according to the UN.

India

Military parade on Republic Day

A military parade was held on Republic Day in the Indian capital of New Delhi on 26.01.22. Military battalions and floats marched from the Presidential Palace through the renovated tree-lined Rajpath Boulevard to celebrate the country's military strength and cultural diversity. President Ram Nath Kovind took the salute from the marching columns which included a regiment of the Border Security Force riding on camels. The 90-minute parade ended with a flypast by 75 Air Force fighter jets, including Rafale jets, transport planes and helicopters. Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the National War Memorial in New Delhi, where he laid a wreath at a ceremony.

Protests over flaws in recruitment in the railway sector

Since 24.01.22, young job seekers in the north-eastern state of Bihar have been protesting against allegedly unfair entrance exams for the government-run rail sector. Angry mobs set fire to empty train carriages, blocked tracks and burned effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Police used tear gas and batons to violently disperse the crowd. The job-seekers allege irregularities in recruitment by the mammoth railways department, one of the world's largest employers which has more than 1.2 million people working for it. The protests began on a small scale and have since spread.

Iran

Details on prison sentence for human rights activist

Citing the husband of human rights activist Narges Mohammadi, who recently received a lengthy prison sentence (cf. BN of 24.01.22), Iranian foreign media have reported further details about the sentence. They say Mohammadi was sentenced by the 26th branch of the Revolutionary Court to eight years and two months in prison, 74 lashes,

two years of exile from Tehran, a ban on activity in institutions and political parties, and also a two-year ban on social media activity and phone interviews. In the reasons for the sentence, allegations made by the intelligence service regarding a conspiracy with Saudi Arabia were confirmed. This was prompted by Mohammadi's nomination for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize by Amnesty International Norway. The EU has since condemned the prison sentence and called for the activist's release.

Anti-regime rapper handed suspended sentence

Rapper Tomaj Salehi has been sentenced to six months in prison and fined for insulting the revolutionary leader and spreading propaganda against the regime, according to media reports. The prison sentence was suspended for one year. Salehi was arrested at his home on 13.09.21 as part of an operation carried out by security forces (cf. BN of 20.09.21) and was released on bail shortly afterwards. In his songs, he regularly denounces arbitrary authority, oppression, corruption and mismanagement in the Islamic Republic. His songs are widely heard on social media.

LGBTIQ: threat of punishment for imprisoned lesbian activist

Foreign media, quoting Amnesty International (ai), report that a lesbian activist imprisoned in Orumiyeh prison (western Azerbaijan) has been charged with corruption on earth (Persian: Efsad-e fi'l-'arz). The broadly defined offence is punishable by death according to the Iranian Penal Code (Article 286 ICC). According to ai, the 28-year-old woman has been in detention since the end of October 2021 because of her sexual orientation and gender identity and posts on social media in defence of LGBTIQ rights. A related charge is reportedly being prepared. An Iranian LGBTIQ network has reported that prior to her arrest, the woman had lived and worked in the Kurdistan Autonomous Region in northern Iraq where she was arrested for the first time after giving an interview about the situation of the LGBTIQ community in the context of a documentary by the BBC's Persian-language channel. She was initially detained for 21 days. When she then tried to flee to Turkey, she briefly returned to Iran and was arrested by members of the Revolutionary Guards (Sepah/Pasdaran for short). According to the report, the woman was also accused of engaging in house church activities and promoting Christianity. A court ruling on the charges has not yet been announced.

Iraq

Hostilities against ISIS

On 24.01.22, four ISIS militants were killed in an air strike in Salah ad-Din, according to the Iraqi military. On 29.01.22, nine members of ISIS were killed in an air strike in Diyala province who were allegedly the ISIS cell responsible for the deaths of 11 members of the Iraqi security forces on 21.11.22. In parallel, four alleged ISIS militants were arrested in Nineveh province for allegedly collecting funds for the organisation.

On 28.01.22 an attack was carried out on the house of a commander of the Kurdish anti-terrorist units in Erbil. The family denies that it being embroiled in a feud with another family was the cause of the attack, but it is not possible to say with certainty at the moment whether there is a connection with the anti-ISIS actions.

Attacks on Speaker of Parliament and Baghdad airport

On 25.01.22, three missiles were fired at the house of the Speaker of Parliament Mohammed al-Habousi in his home province of Anbar, injuring two civilians.

On 28.01.22 at least six missiles were fired at Baghdad airport. A parked Iraqi Airways aircraft was damaged. So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, even though the action bears all the hallmarks of numerous similar attacks carried out by pro-Iranian militias.

Lebanon

Economic situation

On 28.01.22, UNICEF published a report stating that the crisis in Lebanon has had a massive impact on the education of children and young people. 31% of young people in Lebanon are neither in school, education nor in any form of regular employment. The school enrolment rate has dropped from 60% in the school year 2020/2021 (already relatively low) to just 43% in the school year 2021/2022. Currently, in around 13% of families, children

under the age of 18 are contributing to the household income through gainful employment, and in many cases expenditure on both education and health has been reduced in favour of expenditure on food or housing. In practice, only about 60% of all minors have access to basic healthcare in an emergency.

The USA announced on 28.01.22 that it would send US\$ 67 million in additional military aid to the Lebanese military. This is explicitly intended to ensure the supply of essential goods to the Lebanese armed forces. The reasons given are the economic crisis and the fear of further unrest.

Liberia

Dozens killed in stampede at religious gathering

On 19.01.22, a group of men intending to commit robbery raided a two-day Christian prayer event hosted by the popular pastor Abraham Kromah involving hundreds of participants in New Kru Town, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of the capital Monrovia, triggering a stampede. According to doctors, 29 people died and many people were injured. One person was arrested.

Liberian street gangs known as Zogos (also Zogoes) frequently commit robberies wielding machetes and other weapons. The perpetrators are drug-addicted and disadvantaged youths, most of whom were former child soldiers. The Liberian government has so far done nothing to integrate the members of the street gangs into society.

Libya

Security forces killed in ISIS attack

According to the Ministry of Interior, at least three members of the security forces and four ISIS militants were killed in an attack perpetrated by ISIS against Libyan security forces in the Qatrun region in the south-west of the country on 26.01.22.

Mexico

Drop in the number of homicides in 2021, increase in femicide

On 20.01.22, the Mexican government published preliminary figures on the total number of people who died from homicide and femicide. While the total number of homicides decreased, falling by 3.6% to 33,308 in 2021 compared to the previous year, the number of femicides rose by 2.7% in 2021 compared to 2020. A total of 1,004 women were the victims of femicide in 2021, more than twice as many as in 2015.

Sexual minorities: lesbian couple killed in Chihuahua

On 23.01.22, two mutilated bodies of a lesbian couple were found on a highway in Valle de Juárez in the state of Chihuahua. Investigations have been launched. According to the NGO Letra S, Chihuahua is the state with the second-highest number of hate crimes against LGBTIQ people in Mexico after Veracruz.

Disputes erupt between inmates in Colima – eight people killed

On 25.01.22, at least eight people were killed and seven others injured in clashes that erupted between inmates at the local prison, according to the Colima Public Security Secretariat (Secretaría de Seguridad Pública).

Montenegro

Deepening government crisis triggers resignations in the Anti-Corruption Council

According to a recent media report, four members of the National Council for the Fight against High-Level Corruption resigned on 26.01.22 in protest against Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic's assumption of the chairmanship of the body. As a result of the deepening crisis within the ruling coalition, Krivokapic had dismissed the previous chairman and Deputy Prime Minister Dritan Abazovic from this body, which was criticised by the resigning civil rights activists as an unlawful concentration of power. Abazovic had warned the Prime Minister not

to violate the constitutional order. Tensions between the current coalition government escalated on 19.01.22 after the co-ruling Black-White Alliance led by Abazovic, together with the opposition parties, tabled a motion of no confidence against the government in order to have the current government's ability to win a majority reviewed following the long-simmering parliamentary stalemate. Previously, Abasovic's proposal to form a minority government had been rejected. Instead, Krivokapic called for early elections to be held on 20.01.22. The Democratic Front (DF) as the strongest bloc within the current government had again proposed a government reshuffle to solve the crisis. As a result, on 24.01.22 Krivokapic took over the coordination of the Ministry of Justice from Sergej Sekulovic, the former Minister of the Interior, who was politically close to Abasovic. Speaker of Parliament Aleksa Becic had scheduled the vote of no confidence in parliament for 04.02.22.

Morocco / Western Sahara

Attacks repeatedly being carried out by the Sahrawi army/Polisario Front

The Sahara press agency SPS regularly reports on attacks carried out repeatedly by the Sahrawi army/Polisario Front on Moroccan forces in the border areas of Western Sahara, most recently on 29.01.22 in the sectors of El Forsia, Aousserd and Houza, and previously in the Mahbas sector. There are no reports of fighting in the border area of Western Sahara from the Moroccan side.

Background information

The Sahrawi Army/Polisario Front has become more active again since June 2020. In October 2020, the Sahrawi Army/Polisario Front blocked the movement of goods in the buffer zone between Morocco and Mauritania. In November 2020, Moroccan forces lifted the blockade and established a security corridor to facilitate the movement of goods and people. The Polisario Front leadership then declared an end to the UN-brokered ceasefire, which had been in place since 1991.

Myanmar

Security situation

Soldiers of the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) conducted raids on ten villages in Pauk Township (Magway Region) from 20.01.22 to 23.01.22, looting and damaging the houses of suspected resistance fighters, arresting an unknown number of people and shooting one man dead. Since 14.01.22, junta forces have also been setting fire to oil fields in the townships of Pauk and Myaing. According to local media reports, the aim of these actions is to put pressure on the local population, for whom the fields are an important source of income, and to break the resistance against the military regime.

Civilians were reportedly killed and wounded in fighting between the Tatmadaw and an alliance of resistance forces from the Katha People's Defence Force (PDF) and the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) on 22.01.22 and 23.01.22 north of Katha town (Sagaing region). The military reportedly fired heavy artillery at the area.

A pregnant woman and a child were killed in Palaw (Tanintharyi Region) after an explosive device suspected to have been detonated by junta forces exploded on 23.01.22. According to media reports, this may have been in retaliation for a deadly attack against military personnel carried out by the Palaw Township PDF resistance group on 08.01.22. A 16-year-old CDF fighter was fatally shot in a gunfire exchange between members of the Chinland Defence Force (CDF) and Junta forces in Kanpetlet, Chin State, on 23.01.22.

In Demoso (Kayah State), fighting broke out once again between the Tatmadaw and the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF on 24.01.22), supported by PDF troops. The Tatmadaw used combat helicopters for reinforcement, but there is no confirmed information about the number of people killed or injured so far.

Security forces arrested seven volunteers and confiscated an ambulance, medicines and medical equipment during a raid carried out on a charity clinic in Dawei (Tanintharyi) on 24.01.22.

The Earthquake PDF bombed a branch of KBZ Bank in Pakkoku (Magway) on 24.01.22. The bank had already been the target of attacks and robberies in Mandalay and Yangon in October 2021 for allegedly freezing accounts of supporters of the civil disobedience and revolutionary movements and passing on information about donations to the junta.

Tatmadaw soldiers shot dead four civilians, including a 10-year-old child, in Ayadaw (Sagaing) on 26.01.22 after their unit became the target of a bomb detonated out by the Ayadaw Revolutionary Alliance.

On 27.01.22, fighting broke out between the Tatmadaw and the Kokang Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in Kutkai (Shan State).

Junta forces surprised nine members of the Ye-U PDF planting explosive devices in Ye-U (Sagaing) on 28.01.22, arresting seven of them and shooting them dead. The incident was preceded by a skirmish between the PDF and a military column on the same day, in which several soldiers were reportedly killed.

New charges against Aung San Suu Kyi and Win Myint

Myanmar's judiciary formally indicted the ousted de facto head of government Aung San Suu Kyi and former President Win Myint for electoral fraud on 31.01.22. The charges relate to the parliamentary election held on 08.11.20 in which Suu Kyi's party, the National League of Democracy (NLD), won more than half of all parliamentary seats. No evidence was provided. Suu Kyi, against whom ten other cases are currently pending, had already been sentenced to a total of six years in prison in December 2021 and January 2022. Observers and human rights experts assume that this is a show trial.

Namibia

Supreme Court rules against the recognition of same-sex marriages

The Supreme Court of Namibia ruled against the recognition of the marriage of two homosexual couples on 20.01.22. The judge stated that it was bound by the legal prohibition of same-sex relationships. The couples, legally married in South Africa and Germany, had been unable to obtain work or residence permits for their non-Namibian spouses and filed a lawsuit against the non-recognition of same-sex marriages.

Nicaragua

Convictions of two government opponents

On 27.01.22, opposition member Douglas Alfredo Cerros Lanzas, who was arrested during the presidential elections on 06.11.21, was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment for spreading false news and undermining national sovereignty. Opposition member Donald Margarito Alvarenga Mendoza, who had also been arrested on 06.11.21, was the first to be sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment on 13.01.22, also on the basis of the Ley Especial de Ciberdelitos (Special Law on Cybercrime) and Law 1055 (Law on the Defence of the People's Rights to Independence, Sovereignty and Self-Determination for Peace). Both were accused of spreading false news via social media and calling for an election boycott.

CPI: Nicaragua – the most corrupt country in Central America in 2021

According to the latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released by the NGO Transparency International, Nicaragua ranked last in Central America with 20 points in 2021 and second to last in the entire region along with Haiti, ahead of Venezuela (14 points). The organisation sees a direct link between the high level of corruption in these countries and the prevailing unstable political situation and/or humanitarian crisis there. Nicaragua has dropped nine spots in the past ten years; according to the NGO, the country lacks transparency and counterbalance to the considerable concentration of power in the executive.

Niger

Jihadists killed in attack on a military post

According to Nigerien army sources, ten suspected jihadists were killed in an attack on a military post on 29.01.22. The attack took place near the village of Chétima Wangou in the south-eastern region of Diffa near the border with Nigeria. The area has been the target of repeated attacks by jihadist groups in the past.

Nigeria

IMF growth forecast

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted on 25.01.22 that Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP) would grow by 2.7% in both 2022 and 2023. However, IMF officials also made it clear that Nigeria faces several economic challenges, such as high inflation, limited fiscal scope for the government and slow progress on COVID-19 vaccinations. As Africa's largest economy, Nigeria ranked 26th in the IMF's 2021 global ranking (cf. BN of 25.01.21).

Corruption remains high

Nigeria has dropped in the Transparency International (TI) corruption ranking. According to the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) published by the NGO on 25.01.22, Nigeria dropped five places in the global ranking and is now ranked 154th. As in 2021 (cf. BN of 01.02.21), representatives of Nigerian authorities criticised TI and questioned the sources used for the ranking. According to recent media reports, the US Consulate General, in collaboration with the Inter-Religious Coalition Against Corruption in Nigeria, established in 2016, recently created a web portal that allows Nigerians to share their experiences of corruption online. Portal users can follow the processing of their reports online.

UNICEF warns of education crisis

A UNICEF representative in Nigeria issued a statement marking the International Day of Education on 24.01.22, saying that 10.5 million Nigerian children are not attending school. At the same time, he welcomed the Nigerian government's commitment to increase the country's annual spending on education by 50% in the next two years and by 100% by 2025. He said the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken against it have recently exacerbated the crisis in the Nigerian education sector. Girls, children with disabilities, children from the poorest households, children affected by homelessness and displacement, and children in geographically very remote areas are more often affected than others. The statement added that in March 2021 alone, a total of 618 schools in the six northern states of Sokoto, Zamfara, Kano, Katsina, Niger and Yobe had been temporarily closed due to fear of attacks and kidnappings and this had also contributed to the education crisis there.

Pakistan

Journalist shot dead in Lahore

On 24.01.22, a Pakistani journalist working for a local TV station was shot dead near the Lahore Press Club. Journalists protested in the capital of Punjab province following the attack. After the killing, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists announced a countrywide protest.

Attacks in Belochistan

Separatist militants attacked a Pakistani army checkpost in Kech district in the south-western province of Balochistan on 25.01.22/26.01.22, killing ten soldiers, according to Pakistani military sources. One of the assailants was also killed in the ensuing gunfire exchange. In the meantime, three more suspects have been arrested. The separatist Balochistan Liberation Front has claimed responsibility for the attack. According to its spokesperson, 17 soldiers were killed in the incident.

On 28.01.22, three members of the security forces and a tribal elder were killed and at least eight others were injured when two IEDs exploded in a village in Dera Bugti district. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the bombing.

Supreme Court appoints female judge for the first time

On 24.01.22, Ayesha Malik was appointed the country's first female Supreme Court judge. This is a milestone for the traditionally conservative and male-dominated judiciary in the country. Malik was previously a judge at a high court in Lahore. The Pakistan Bar Association has repeatedly criticised her appointment, claiming that it violated the seniority principle and that Malik has superseded three most senior judges on a high court.

Talks with Afghan Taliban in Kabul; peace talks with the TTP in Afghanistan

On 29.01.22, Pakistan's National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf, leading a delegation of economic and security experts, arrived in the Afghan capital Kabul for a meeting with senior members of the Taliban-led government to discuss bilateral cooperation, border issues and efforts to avert a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Yusuf and Taliban Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi discussed trade, transit and the implementation of key regional projects, including the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline and the Central Asia-South Asia CASA-1000 electricity project, a Taliban spokesperson said. Pakistan has been accused of harbouring the Afghan Taliban for decades. Relations between Islamabad and Kabul have nevertheless been strained in recent months as Pakistan has continued to build a 2,500-kilometre fence along its border with Afghanistan.

On 09.01.22, a delegation of influential Pashtun tribal elders from Pakistan had been sent to Bermal district in Paktika province in neighbouring Afghanistan to hold peace talks with the Pakistani Taliban, Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), after peace talks with the Pakistani government had broken down in December 2021 and a one-month ceasefire expired.

Sri Lanka

Debt and economic crisis: pressure grows on government

The economic situation in the country is steadily deteriorating and foreign currency reserves are dwindling (cf. BN of 06.09.21 and 29.11.21). According to a statement issued by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka on 21.01.22, the inflation rate rose to 14% in December 2021 (November 2021: 11.1 %) and food prices continue to soar. Imported goods such as medical supplies, gas and fuel are reportedly becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. A lack of fuel has led to several announced and unannounced power cuts in recent weeks.

In the 2022 Debt Report published on 26.01.22, the alliance erlassjahr.de and the aid organisation Misereor state that the ratio of the country's debt to public revenue is more than 1,000. An average of US\$ 4.4 billion in debt service payments is owed to foreign countries by 2028. The average annual government revenue is only US\$ 7 billion.

Reform of controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act announced

On 27.01.22, the government issued a gazette notification saying the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), which came into force in 1979, is to be amended. The UN, the EU and human rights organisations have long criticised the law (cf. BN of 28.06.21). President Gotabaya Rajapaksa also reportedly announced human rights reforms in an address delivered to Parliament on 18.01.22 and signalled willingness to accept proposals from the international community on human rights issues.

Sudan

Protests continue

Protests took place once again in Karthoum, Wad Madani and other Sudanese cities on 24.01.22, 27.01.22 and 30.01.22. The protesters repeatedly called for a civilian government and for an investigation into the deaths of those who have died in demonstrations so far. According to the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, two people were killed in Karthoum and one in Wad Madani by the use of live bullets during the demonstrations held on 24.01.22. In addition, water cannons, tear gas and stun grenades were used.

One person died from a wound sustained during the protest on 30.01.22. It was still unclear on 31.01.22 how the injuries were sustained. The protests on 30.01.22 took place despite the ban imposed on demonstrations and were also directed against the presidential palace in Karthoum. However, the protesters were prevented from moving further into the city centre and towards the palace by the massive use of tear gas and rubber bullets. Some people were injured in the process.

Furthermore, additional activists were arrested by security forces. On the eve of the planned protests on 24.01.22, several raids were carried out and numerous people were arrested. The women's rights activist Amira Othman was also arrested when her home was raided, drawing criticism from the national and international community. A team from the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières was also arrested by security forces during the protest held on 24.01.22 when they left a hospital where protestors were being treated. The members of the team were interrogated about

the activities of their NGO and were not released by the police until the following morning. The NGO has not yet received an official explanation for the arrest and interrogation by the authorities.

After a policeman was allegedly stabbed by protestors during demonstrations that took place on 13.01.22 (cf. BN of 17.01.22), police officers arrested and detained several suspects on 14.01.22. All but two of the suspects have since been released. The lawyers of the two defendants said that their clients had been tortured in detention where they suffered beatings and electric shocks. Relatives were not allowed to see them and were not informed of the exact charges they were facing. In addition, the defendants were questioned about the way the protests were organised and about the members of the active resistance committees, but not about the murdered policeman. The course of events and the official accounts of the police are being generally questioned. Reports are circulating that the policeman had actually been murdered before the protests began on 13.01.22.

Security situation in Darfur and South Kordofan

According to UN sources, inter-communal fighting has resumed in the region around the western Sudanese town of El Geneina over the past week. This has allegedly displaced more than 15,000 people, with 4,500 of them crossing the border into Chad. According to the UN, fighting and violent confrontations have increased once again. The cause of the violence is said to be a dispute between two members of the Masalit and unspecified Arab nomads. As a result, armed nomads attacked a village, set fire to several houses and killed nine people. The fighting subsequently spread to other villages in the area. Joint government forces were sent to the region to contain the violence.

Several attacks were also carried out on tourists and tankers in the Central Darfur region around the city of Bindisi last week. According to reports, some of the perpetrators wore military uniforms. Two young girls were assaulted and raped by four armed men north of Bindisi on 25.01.22. There was no doctor available to treat the children and the police failed to investigate the incident after it was reported.

In the South Kordofan region, especially in the area around the town of Dalami, more attacks were carried out against farmers in January 2022. Many of the people were killed or injured while working. According to reports, the police took little action and did not investigate.

Syria

Hasakah: hundreds killed in recapture of prison

After intense fighting with ISIS militants (cf. BN of 24.01.22), the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced on 30.01.22 that they had completely reseed control of al-Sinaa prison in the Ghwayran neighbourhood of Hasakah. US forces, who were also involved in the fighting and for whom it has been the heaviest fighting in Iraq and Syria since the territorial defeat of ISIS in 2019, confirmed this account.

There was initially no comment on the fate of the detained underage boys who had temporarily been held hostage. The prison housed more than 3,000 suspected ISIS supporters and about 700 minors. According to the SDF statement, at least 200 prison inmates and attackers as well as 30 members of the security forces were killed in the clashes. About 45,000 people had to leave their homes in neighbouring residential areas. International journalists on the ground reported how SDF fighters had to remove dozens of bodies in trucks. All shops in Hasakah have had to remain closed since the fighting broke out on 20.01.22.

Syria / Jordan

Smugglers killed at Jordanian-Syrian border

The Jordanian military says it killed 27 suspected smugglers on the border with Syria on 27.01.22 who were attempting to cross the border clandestinely and seized large quantities of narcotics in this and other operations. Other persons had been wounded and had fled back to Syria. There have previously been clashes in connection with smugglers from Syria in which Jordanian soldiers have been killed (cf. BN of 17.01.22).

Thailand

Several bomb explosions, two dead after raid in southern Thailand

According to media reports, at least 13 small bomb explosions struck the southern Thai town of Yala (Yala Province) on 28.01.22. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack. One person was reportedly injured. On the same day, a raid on a residential building by security forces was reported in neighbouring Narathiwat province, during which two suspects accused of two bombings in 2021 were shot dead. According to the think tank Deep South Watch, more than 7,200 people have died and over 13,500 have been injured since the insurgency flared up again between January 2004 and October 2021. At talks held on 11.01.22 and 12.01.22, representatives of the Thai government and the Malay-Muslim separatist group Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) reportedly agreed on a framework as a basis for further peace talks.

Turkey

ECHR judgment

On 24.01.22, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that Turkey had violated the rights of journalist Deniz Yücel. The ECHR ordered Turkey to pay EUR 12,300 in compensation. The ECHR found that Yücel's right to liberty and security, his right to compensation for unlawful detention and his right to freedom of expression had been violated during pre-trial detention in 2017 and 2018.

ECHR Annual Report 2021

The Annual Report of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) was published on 25.01.22. According to the statistics, after Russia, Turkey faced the highest number of applications last year. The statistics show that a total of 44,250 applications were submitted to the ECHR in 2021. Compared to 2020, this represents a 6% increase (in 2020, the number of applications was 41,700). At the end of 2021, 15,251 applications against Turkey were pending before the ECHR. A large proportion of these applications related to complaints of rights violations following the imposition of a state of emergency after the 2016 coup attempt. The number of applications from Turkey relating to the state of emergency is approximately 11,000. A large proportion of these applications relate to detention without sufficient evidence, long periods of detention and the right to a fair trial. The ECHR has condemned Turkey in a total of 31 cases for violations of the freedom of expression. Hence in 2021, Turkey was the state with the highest number of violations of freedom of expression among Council of Europe member states.

Verdict in the Yuksekdağ case

On 29.01.22, the Supreme Court of Appeals upheld a one-year prison sentence against former HDP leader Figen Yüksekdağ for terrorist propaganda. The Court of Cassation in Ankara had already rejected the appeal of the sentence on all points in its decision of 22.12.21 and confirmed the decision of the judiciary from the second instance. This means that the legal process in Turkey is exhausted. The verdict against Yüksekdağ is based on a speech she gave in Istanbul on 15.02.15 to mark the anniversary of the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan. In the subsequent trial before a criminal court, the public prosecutor's office also accused the politician of praising criminals and violating the law on assembly. She was acquitted of these charges in April 2017. Yüksekdağ was arrested in November 2016 and has been in pre-trial detention since then. In the main trial, in which Yüksekdağ faces up to 83 years in prison, the politician is accused, among other things, of founding and leading a terrorist organisation. According to the public prosecutor's office, she is also accused of spreading propaganda for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and of separatism. In the Kobanê trial, the politician and more than a hundred other defendants are additionally accused of anti-state activities, 37 murders and dozens of attempted murders in connection with the protests against the actions of the Turkish government during the siege of the Syrian city of Kobanê in October 2014. Figen Yüksekdağ has already been sentenced to several years in prison in other proceedings, including, in 2018, receiving a one-and-a-half-year sentence for spreading propaganda for a terrorist organisation as she had referred to the PKK as a freedom movement during an interview.

Uganda

Government critic released from prison

Kakwenza Rukirabashaija was reportedly first taken to a Special Forces Command Unit facility by armed men in plain clothes after his hearing on 25.01.22, where it was decided that he would be released on bail. He was released on 26.01.22 and subsequently sought medical treatment. The hearing, based on a charge of offensive communication, will continue on 04.02.22. Until further notice, the government critic is not allowed to speak publicly about his stay in prison.

Ukraine

Expansion of army reserves, fatal incident in Dnipro

Ukraine is strengthening its army personnel reserves amid fears of a Russian Federation troop concentration on the common border. According to media reports, large numbers of civilians, including many women, are currently undergoing basic military training. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence, women from certain occupational groups aged between 18 and 60 who are fit for military service have been subject to compulsory military registration since December 2021. A fatal incident also occurred on 27.01.22 when a conscript shot and killed five people and injured another five in the city of Dnipro, according to the Ministry of the Interior. The suspect was arrested, however the background to the crime is still unclear.

Venezuela

Collection of signatures to hold a referendum on the recall of President Maduro

On 26.01.22, signatures were collected in all states of the country for twelve hours to determine whether or not to hold a recall referendum against President Nicolás Maduro. Based on information provided by the predominantly pro-government National Electoral Council (Consejo Nacional Electoral, (CNE)) on 27.01.22, this process, which was requested by opposition representatives, was unsuccessful as the necessary 20% of signatures could not be collected in each state within the required period. Opposition representatives criticised the timeframe as being too short. In principle, the constitution in Venezuela provides for the possibility of removing elected officials by referendum after they have completed half their term of office.

Yemen

UN: record number of civilian casualties

In a joint statement issued on 25.01.22, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, and the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, David Gressly, described the month of January 2022 as "probably record-breaking" in terms of civilian casualties in the conflict in Yemen. This was mainly due to the air strike carried out by the anti-Houthi coalition on a detention centre on 21.01.22 (cf. BN of 24.01.22) in which 91 people were killed and more than 200 were injured.

Meanwhile, five people, including three civilians, were killed in a Houthi missile attack on the town of Marib on 26.01.22. Twenty-three other people were injured.

Child soldiers

According to an expert report submitted to the UN Security Council, around 2,000 child soldiers from the ranks of the Houthi movement were killed in combat between January 2020 and May 2021. The report claims the children killed were between 10 and 17 years of age, but seven-year-olds are already being taught auxiliary activities, such as how to clean weapons.

UAE intercepts Houthi missile

The Defence Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced that the UAE intercepted and destroyed a Houthi missile on 31.01.22. It was not disclosed against which target the missile was directed. This is the third

attack to be carried out against targets in the UAE in a fortnight. The foiled attack occurred during a visit of several days by Israel's President Isaac Herzog. The Houthis had previously announced plans for further attacks, mentioning the Expo in Dubai as a potential target, should the UAE continue its military involvement in Yemen.

Group 62 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration
Briefing Notes
BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de