



# Briefing Notes

## Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

11 April 2022

### Afghanistan

#### Security situation

On 06.04.22, a hand grenade was detonated during a prayer at the Pul-e Khishti mosque in downtown Kabul, injuring at least 24 people.

The National Resistance Front (NRF) has reported clashes with the Taliban in Punjjir province on 05.04.22 and in Baghlan province on 07.04.22 and the following days. Several Taliban fighters were reportedly killed in the incidents. The Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) resistance group said it attacked four Taliban bases in Parvan, Badakhshan, Kandahar and Baghlan. The Taliban deny any armed resistance.

#### Persecution

There are numerous reports of arrests by the Taliban: former Senator Maulawi Abdul Wahab Irfan, an ethnic Uzbek from Takhar province when he was crossing the border from Iran; Ghulam Rabani Hadafmand, chairman of the committee for the protection of journalists in Ghor province, and another journalist (06.04.22); two former security forces in Bamyan province (also on 06.04.22) and ten or eleven activists following protests against the decision to keep secondary schools for girls closed in Bamyan province (06.04.22, confirmed by Taliban, three female activists have meanwhile been released). On 09.04.22, the Taliban arrested and then killed a man in Parvan province on charges of having contacts with the NRF.

It is also reported that two women were beaten by the Taliban for inappropriate dress and that students were beaten for not performing a prayer (06.04. and 07.04.22).

#### Education

In a letter to state and private universities, the Taliban have banned mixed-gender academic conferences. Female students are not allowed to share on social media photos or videos of graduation ceremonies. Lecturers and students are forbidden to speak to the media.

### Burkina Faso

#### Government: Ousted President Kaboré released

The transitional government has informed that ousted President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was released on 06.04.22 and allowed to return to his residence in Ougadougou, with measures in place to ensure his safety. Kaboré had been under house arrest since the January 2022 coup (cf. BN of 31.01.22). However, Kaboré's party Mouvement du peuple pour le progrès (MPP) stated on 07.04.22 that he was still subject to unspecified restrictions on his freedom.

### **Former President Compaoré convicted**

On 06.04.22, a military court in Ouagadougou sentenced ex-President Blaise Compaoré in absentia to life imprisonment for attacking state security and participating in the assassination of his predecessor in office, Thomas Sankara, in a military coup in 1987. The same sentences were handed down to Compaoré's former security chief Haycinthe Kafando (in absentia) and to army commander Gilbert Diendéré. Eight other co-defendants received prison sentences of between three and 20 years, and three defendants were acquitted.

Sankara had been killed along with twelve other people in the coup that brought Compaoré to power. A protest movement supported by large parts of the population successfully pushed Compaoré to resign in 2014 after he had sought another term as president. Compaoré went into exile in Côte d'Ivoire and was given citizenship of that country. In 2015, an attempted coup organised by military officers close to Compaoré against the transitional government established in 2014 failed. The coup leader Gilbert Diendéré has been serving a 20-year prison sentence for the attempt.

The trial for Sankara's assassination was opened in October 2021. During his time in office, Compaoré had prevented the judicial processing of the 1987 coup. Sankara himself had come to power in 1983 with the support of Compaoré, also through a military coup.

### **At least a dozen soldiers killed in jihadist attack on military base**

The military reported that on 08.04.22, at least 12 soldiers and four volunteers were killed and 21 other soldiers injured in an attack by suspected jihadists on a military base in Namissiguima, northern Sanmatenga province.

## **Cameroon**

### **Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) suspends medical activities in Anglophone region**

On 29.03.22, the humanitarian organisation MSF suspended its services in the Southwest Region, one of the two Anglophone regions of the country, as reported by the media with reference to information from MSF. The decision is based on the arrest of four Cameroonian MSF staff by the authorities in late 2021/early 2022 on charges of collaborating with separatists. The suspension of MSF activities comes at a time of several cholera outbreaks in different parts of the country; for the south-west, where the health system has reportedly collapsed due to the prevailing conflict, the health ministry reported on 06.04.22 a total of 100 cholera cases in the previous week.

### **Security situation in the Anglophone regions**

The conflict over the Anglophone regions, which has been raging since 2017 (cf. most recently BN of 16.08.21 and 15.11.21), has displaced between half a million and over a million people (UN: 750,000 people) and has claimed 3,300 lives so far (according to UN figures, other media report over 6,000 deaths). There are also frequent reports of violence against schools and of abductions (cf. BN of 09.11.20 and 21.12.20). Most recent reports have informed that on 08.04.22, a total of 33 seminary students were released after being abducted at the lecture in Manyu department. Also, separatist fighters appear to have captured at least twelve people, most of them women. A video taken on 06.04.22 shows how the kidnapped detainees are accused of having taken part in protests against alleged mistreatment by the militants in exchange for payment from the government.

## **Costa Rica**

### **Presidential election result**

The supreme electoral authority has informed that in the run-off election for the presidency held on 03.04.22, former finance minister Rodrigo Chaves Robles (PSD) won against his competitor José María Figueres of the PLN (cf. BN of 14.02.22). The voter turnout was only about 55 percent.

## Colombia

### **Extradition of "Clan del Golfo" leader Otoniel**

On 06.04.22, the Colombian supreme court approved the extradition to the USA of the leader of the narco-military group Clan del Golfo, Dairo Antonio Úsuga alias Otoniel, who had been arrested in October 2021.

### **Seven civilians presumed killed in military operation in Putumayo**

At least eleven people were killed in a military security operation in the rural municipality of Puerto Leguizamo, Putumayo, on 28.03.22. While the defence ministry stated that they were members of the FARC dissident group Comandos de la Frontera, NGOs as well as the National Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (Opiac) speak of at least seven civilians killed, among them an indigenous community leader. The national ombudsman's office has also confirmed considerable doubts about the official version and has called for an independent investigation into the events.

## Cuba

### **Prosecution demands heavy prison sentences for two well-known government critics**

Reports are circulating in social media that the prosecution has demanded ten years in prison for rapper Maykel Castillo and seven years for artist Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara. While Castillo had co-written the anthem of the July 2021 social protests, Patria y vida, Alcántara was a member of the San Isidro movement. Both had been arrested in the course of the demonstrations.

## Democratic Republic of the Congo

### **Several deaths in custody; Makala Central Prison: situation of inmates, detention practices**

According to press reports in March and April 2022, the poor detention conditions in the central prisons of Matadi (Congo Central province), Mambasa (Ituri), Kindu and Kasongo (both Maniema) have led to several deaths in custody due to inadequate or lacking food, drinking water and health care, among other things.

Meanwhile, Congolese justice minister Rose Mutombo has visited to the overcrowded Makala Central Prison in Kinshasa and noted several irregularities, including cases of arbitrary detention, prolonged pre-trial detention and missing detention records. Currently, 8,889 people (among them 4,271 pre-trial detainees) are held in Makala Central Prison, which is reported to have a capacity of only about 1,500 inmates (cf. BN of 13.12.21). Citing a decision of the justice minister, the UN-supported radio Okapi reported on 04.04.22 that from now on no more remand prisoners are to be detained in Makala, but only convicted prisoners.

## Ecuador

### **20 dead in prison riot**

On 03.04.22, police reported that least 20 people have been killed and ten others injured in violent clashes between rival criminal groups for supremacy in the El Turi detention centre in Cuenca, southern Azuay province.

## Egypt

### **Well-known activist begins hunger strike; three other activists have ended hunger strike**

As has been reported by his family, activist Alaa Abdel Fattah who has been imprisoned in Tora Prison since September 2019, started a hunger strike in early April 2022 in protest against his harsh prison conditions. Fattah is reportedly under strict guard and incommunicado detention and is neither allowed the possession of books nor physical activities. He had been sentenced to five years in prison in December 2021 for spreading false news. Meanwhile, three activists also detained in Tora Prison, Ahmed Douma, Ziyad El-Elleimy and Ahmed Samir Santawy,

have reportedly ended their hunger strike, which they began at the end of March 2022, after their detention conditions were improved by the prison authorities.

## **El Salvador**

### **Penal Code reform adopted providing for heavy prison sentences for disseminating gang messages**

On 05.04.22, the Ecuadorian parliament passed a reform of the criminal code that provides for prison sentences of up to 15 years for the publication and dissemination of gang-related messages, including through the media. This includes not only the posting of graffiti, symbols, and gang-related messages on public or private property, but also the reproduction of corresponding messages by means of reporting in traditional and also digital communication media. Opposition MPs have criticised the law as a considerable encroachment on the freedom of the press and information; the national journalists' association (APES) and NGOs speak of an attempt at censorship and a door-opener to criminalise media workers.

In the course of the state crackdown on gangs (maras) following a sharp increase in homicides on 26.03.22 (cf. BN of 28.03.22), almost 7,000 suspected gang members have been arrested by 05.04.22, the justice and security ministry has informed. Relatives and the media, however, have also reported cases of arbitrary arrests of people who merely lived in neighbourhoods dominated by gangs.

## **Ethiopia**

### **Ethnic cleansing in West Tigray**

A report published on 05.04.22 by Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) accuses security forces and militias in Ethiopia's Amhara region of committing serious human rights violations against Tigrayan civilians after taking control of the Western Zone in November 2020 in the wake of the armed conflict in the regional state of Tigray (cf. BN of 16.11.20). Several hundred thousand people have been systematically displaced from the region through threats, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, arbitrary mass arrests, looting, forced displacement and the denial of humanitarian aid, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, the report says. The Ethiopian government is accused of having condoned these acts.

AI calls for aid agencies to be granted immediate and unimpeded access to the region, for all arbitrary detainees to be released and for human rights abuses to be investigated. The parties to the conflict are urged to agree to the deployment of an international peacekeeping force led by the African Union to ensure the protection of all ethnic groups in Ethiopia from further abuses.

### **Ethiopia launches military offensive against the Oromo Liberation Army**

Local media report that the Ethiopian armed forces started a military offensive against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA, OLA-Shene) at the beginning of April 2022. There is contradictory information regarding the zones in Oromia regional state where the military operations are taking place. Some sources say that the fighting is concentrated in the areas of Wollega, West and North Shewa in western Ethiopia, while other sources report military clashes in the town of Moyale (Borena zone) in southern Ethiopia, near the border with Kenya.

The OLA, a splinter group of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), refuses negotiations with the government and tries to gain autonomy for Oromia by the force of arms. The group, which had been classified as a terrorist organisation by the Ethiopian parliament in May 2021 (cf. BN of 03.05.21), is accused of arbitrary killings, kidnappings, and other human rights violations.

## **Gambia**

### **Indictment on charges of aggravated homosexuality**

The Gambian news portal The Standard reported on 06.04.22 that a man has been formally charged with "aggravated homosexuality" under Article 144A(1)(a) of the criminal law amendment act of 2014. The prosecution accuses the defendant of having had sexual intercourse with a 12-year-old in 2021. Aggravated homosexuality is punishable by life imprisonment. Since President Adama Barrow formally took power in 2017, there has been no

evidence of prosecutions and criminal convictions for homosexuality. In an individual case marked by peculiarities (confession), a court had sentenced a defendant to the maximum penalty for attempted homosexuality on 26.04.21 (cf. BN of 03.05.21).

## **Guinea**

### **Return of Alpha Condé**

Barely three months after leaving the country for medical treatment in the United Arab Emirates (cf. BN of 24.01.22), former President Alpha Condé returned to Guinea on 08.04.22. Condé had been in office since 2010 until his ousting on 05.09.21; his return was linked by the media to the publication of an audio recording on social media in which Condé has reportedly commented on the leadership question in his party Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée (RPG). Condé's departure from the country had been conditional on his not becoming politically involved, media reports say.

### **Former Prime Minister arrested; "Assises Nationales" reconciliation conference**

Media report that Ibrahima Kassory Fofana, the last prime minister under Condé (cf. BN of 06.09.21 and 13.09.21), and three former ministers were arrested on 06.04.22 on charges of unlawful enrichment and embezzlement of public funds. The four politicians were brought before the newly established special criminal court CRIEF (cf. BN of 04.04.22), which issued corresponding arrest warrants. Their lawyers criticised, among other things, that the accusations were lacking precision and that the case was one of "remote-controlled" justice.

On 31.03.22, an extraordinary congress of the former ruling party RPG had elected Fofana as provisional party leader for the period until the next regular party congress. At the congress, Fofana offered to accompany the ruling junta through his party's political transition. The RPG, contrary to a group of political parties united to form the G58, is participating in the "Assises Nationales" (roughly "national meeting") forum hosted by the junta. The forum, which lasts from 22.03.22 to 29.04.22 and is attended by a wide range of social actors, is intended to contribute to the reconciliation of the country. After the arrests, the RPG has threatened to leave the "Assises Nationales" and criticised "harassment" and "arbitrary measures" by the junta.

## **Iran**

### **Detained writer transferred to Evin Prison after temporary release on furlough**

Citing the Iranian Writers' Union, foreign media report that the writer and scientist Reza Khandan-Mahabadi has again been transferred to Tehran's Evin prison. He had previously been on prison leave for medical treatment, but he has not fully recovered yet. The Writers' Union issued information to this effect on 03.04.22. Khandan-Mahabadi and the two writers Baktash Abtin and Keyvan Bazhan had each been sentenced to six years in prison at the end of April 2019 for propaganda against the system as well as assembly and collaboration against national security. An appeals court had upheld the sentences of Khandan-Mahabadi and Abtin in late December 2019. The sentence for the third writer, Baktash Abtin, had been halved because he had had no previous convictions to date. Abtin died on 08.01.22 after falling ill with COVID-19 infection; the prison officials failed to provide medical treatment for him (cf. BN of 10.01.22). After Reza Khandan-Mahabadi also developed COVID-19 symptoms, his family had deposited IRR 4 billion (EUR 13,274; as of 07.04.22) for him to be granted a medical furlough.

### **Four women's rights activists to serve prison time**

Human rights organisations and foreign media report that four women's rights activists have been summoned to appear at the department of corrections in Evin within 30 days. The women had been arrested in the spring of 2019 and subsequently been released on bail. In late 2019, the 26th branch of the Revolutionary Court eventually sentenced them to four years and two months in prison each for association and collusion against national security, propaganda activities against the system and religiously prohibited actions by taking off the hijab. However, the prison sentence was reduced by nine months each because the convicts accepted the judge's decision without resistance. The four women are members of the organisation Voice of the Women of Iran.

### **Growing pressure on witnesses testifying in the international People's Tribunal**

Foreign media report that 15 human rights organisations, including Amnesty International (AI), are protesting against increasing pressure the Iranian security authorities put on witnesses of the international November People's Tribunal and on their relatives. Six cases are reported of witnesses being arrested, summoned, interrogated, and threatened with death. In addition, the relatives of Iranians living abroad who have testified at the Tribunal have been ordered to cut ties with the witnesses and publicly denounce their testimonies. These relatives have also been threatened with imprisonment, torture, and harm to their children, the reports say. Out of fear, some families have agreed to repeat statements made by the security forces in front of cameras. One father of a witness in the town of Sanandaj was forced by the secret service to make a video statement. Against this background, the 15 organisations have demanded that the UN Human Rights Council take measures to protect the witnesses and their families.

The so-called November Tribunal was established to address human rights violations during the 2019 November riots. The first round was held in London on the second anniversary of the unrest in late 2021, under intense scrutiny from Iranian foreign media. The panel is made up of international judges. Hundreds of witnesses to the events of the time have been heard so far.

## **Iraq**

### **Rocket attack on refinery in Erbil**

On the evening of 06.04.22, three rockets hit near an oil refinery close to Erbil. There were no reports of personal injury or property damage. According to information provided by the Iraqi authorities, the rockets were fired from the al-Hamdaniya district in Nineveh province where the so-called Popular Mobilisation Units with close ties to Iran have a strong presence. The refinery belongs to Baz Karim Barzinji, whose private house had been destroyed in March by Iran firing missiles at what it claimed to be an Israeli "strategic centre".

### **At least 519 children killed or injured by landmines**

According to UNICEF and the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), at least 519 children have been killed or injured by landmines in Iraq in the last five years. Around 80 percent of the children affected are boys, as they are frequently grazing animals or collecting scrap metal to sell.

## **Kosovo**

### **EU and civil society organisations criticise election of new chief prosecutor**

A recent media report says that the European Union (EU) has expressed concern about the election of Blerim Isufaj as the new prosecutor general on 06.04.22. The head of the EU office in Kosovo, Ambassador Tomas Szunyog, said he was "surprised and disappointed" with the prosecutorial council's decision, after all the problems and complaints that the process had faced. Civil society organisations monitoring the selection process had criticised that it was neither fair, transparent nor merit-based. The EU Progress Report for 2021 had noted that overall, the administration of justice in Kosovo remained slow, inefficient, and vulnerable to undue political influence.

## **Kuwait**

### **Resignation of the government**

On 05.04.22, the Kuwaiti government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid submitted its resignation to crown prince Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah, thus pre-empting a vote of no confidence in parliament scheduled for 06.04.22. This is Kuwait's third government resignation in the last year and a half. Several MPs accuse the Prime Minister of corruption and mismanagement. The Kuwaiti parliament has considerable influence by regional standards and can block draft laws, among other things. During the past months, the parliament made use of this power, thus blocking the government from implementing important reforms.

## **Lebanon**

### **Agreement with International Monetary Fund**

On 07.04.22, the Lebanese government reached a preliminary agreement with the International Monetary Fund IMF. The government pledged to implement the reforms demanded by the IMF, in return for which Lebanon would receive billions in loans to rebuild its economy. However, the actual implementation of the agreement is not certain, as it has yet to be approved by the IMF's senior management and also in view of the fact that a new government will be formed in the course of the parliamentary elections in May 2022. Since 2019, the Lebanese economy has been suffering one of the world's worst crises; it was only on 03.04.22 that deputy Prime Minister al-Shaami declared the Lebanese state as well as the Lebanese Central Bank bankrupt.

## **Mali**

### **Alleged massacre of civilians**

Various media report that the people killed in a military operation in the central Malian town of Moura at the end of March 2022 were not terrorists, as the Malian government claims, but rather civilian victims (cf. BN of 04.04.22). Apparently, the number of victims is also much higher. It is assumed that up to 300 civilians were killed by the Malian military. A report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) says that Russian mercenaries of the "Wagner Group" were also involved in the murder of the civilians. HRW speaks of the "worst single atrocity" in Mali in the past decade. A UN human rights expert has called for a full and independent investigation into the incidents. The Malian authorities have announced to launch an investigation. Apparently, the UN is planning its own investigation and is waiting for permission to access the Moura site, reports say. Diplomatic sources say that Russia, with the support of China, is blocking a UN Security Council request for investigation into the alleged massacre.

## **Montenegro**

### **Growing criticism of faltering government formation**

According to a recent media report, the current deputy prime minister Dritan Abazovic, who has been entrusted with a mandate to form a government since 02.03.22 (cf. BN of 07.03.22), is under growing pressure to successfully conclude the formation of a minority government which he himself favours or else pave the way for early new elections. However, the negotiations, which have been ongoing for several weeks, have stalled due to differences between the parties involved, the report says. Several MPs, including from the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS) and the Social Democratic Party, have urged Abazovic to either successfully complete the formation of the government quickly or else resign his mandate and seek new elections. Under Montenegro's constitution, the deadline to elect a new government expires on 01.06.22.

## **Myanmar**

### **Violence in several parts of the country, persecution of opposition members**

Media report that between 23.03. and 07.04.22, two civilians, two members of the People's Defence Forces PDF and 15 military personnel were killed and many others injured in armed clashes between the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) and local resistance groups (PDF) in the Sagaing and Magway regions. In Gangaw (Magway), junta forces destroyed around 200 homes and displaced several thousand people. In fighting between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armies in Kayin and Shan states, junta forces also attacked civilian targets. Two people died and around 2,000 fled to Thailand. Up to 60 Tatmadaw are reported to have died. Fighting also broke out in Shan State between the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA), with casualties on both sides.

In the same period, junta courts sentenced four media workers to prison terms of between two and five years for reporting on the resistance to the military coup of 01.02.21. A total of 17 others are facing two to ten years in prison for participating in protests and supporting PDFs.

## **Nigeria**

### **Kaduna State: Train robbery and hostage-taking**

After the attack on a train on 28.03.22 (cf. BN of 04.04.22), the group responsible for the assault released two videos. The first video was circulated last week after one of the kidnap victims was set free. Apparently, the victim was released as a “Ramadan gesture” due to his age. In the video, the group also threatened to kill the hostages if the government did not agree to the demands which, however, were not further specified. In the recently released second video, selected kidnap victims directly call on the government to agree to the kidnappers’ demands and to contact them.

At the time of the attack, a total of 362 passengers were on the train. The exact fate of 168 people is still unclear.

### **Kano State: 24 years imprisonment for blasphemy**

On 04.04.22, the president of the Humanist Association of Nigeria Mubarak Bala was tried and sentenced to 24 years in prison for negative remarks about Islam. Bala, who was charged with blasphemy, has been in detention since 2020 after he was denounced for negative remarks about Islam made on social media. As early as 2014, Bala had renounced Islam and was subsequently committed to a psychiatric institution. In 2020, he was arrested in Kaduna State, which is also Islamic, and transferred to Kano State. Because the case was tried in a secular court, Bala received a long prison sentence. In a religious court, he would have faced the death penalty.

### **Acts of violence in several states**

On 10.04.22, unidentified gunmen attacked several villages in central Plateau State, stealing mostly livestock, setting several houses on fire and killing at least 26 people. Several people are still missing. In response, the government has deployed security forces to the region.

On the evening of 04.04.22, unidentified gunmen attacked a military facility in the northwest of Kaduna State. At least ten soldiers were killed and several injured.

During the night to 04.04.22, at least 22 people were abducted in the village of Angwar Maji, Kaduna State. The village is located on a section of the Abuja - Kaduna highway, which has become notorious for kidnappings. The perpetrators reportedly entered the village in army uniforms and visited each house to select the kidnap victims. In view of the uniforms, some villagers initially assumed that all was part of an official military action.

## **Pakistan**

### **Parliament withdraws confidence in Imran Khan**

On 10.04.22, parliament withdrew confidence in Prime Minister Imran Khan, with 174 out of 342 members of parliament voting against him. Earlier, the supreme court invoked by the opposition had unanimously ordered the no-confidence vote to go ahead and revoked the dissolution of parliament (cf. BN of 04.04.22). The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) nominated Shehbaz Sharif as their candidate for the new election. The younger brother of three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif who had been convicted on corruption charges, had mobilised against Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) with an alliance of various parties, including the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was nominated as the PTI's candidate for the new election of Pakistan's prime minister scheduled for 11.04.22.

## **Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel**

### **Israel: Several dead in attack on bar in Tel Aviv**

On the evening of 07.04.22, an attacker killed three Israelis when he opened fire on a well-attended bar in Tel Aviv. More than ten other people were injured. The attacker, from Jenin in the West Bank, was subsequently on the run for several hours until he was stopped and killed by police. This was the fourth deadly attack in three weeks in Israel (cf. BN. of 04.04.22).

On 10.04.22, two Palestinian Israelis were taken into administrative detention for several months. One of them is suspected of planning an attack, the other was arrested for past involvement in militant activities.

### **West Bank: Several dead in (armed) clashes**

During searches by the Israeli military in the town of Jenin, in the north of the West Bank, armed clashes broke out between residents and military personnel. The military had increased its presence in the town because two of the attackers in recent weeks came from there (see above and BN 04.04.22). On 09.04.22, at least one armed Palestinian was killed during the search of the house of one of the attackers. On 09.04. and 10.04.22, several people were arrested in the vicinity of Jenin; also, weapons and equipment were confiscated, and several people were wounded. At a checkpoint in Bethlehem, Israeli military killed an unarmed Palestinian woman on 10.04.22 who failed to stop after multiple requests and did not respond to warning shots.

On the same day, another Palestinian woman was killed by an Israeli soldier in Hebron after she attacked him with a knife and lightly wounded him.

## **Peru**

### **Ongoing socio-political crisis, rising fuel prices and inflation lead to partly violent protests**

Beginning on 28.03.22, a nationwide strike over increased fuel prices as a result of the Ukraine war has escalated into mass protests with road blockades and occasional acts of violence. This is taking place against the backdrop of an ongoing political crisis in the country, as a consequence of which two impeachment proceedings against President Castillo have already failed and various cabinet reshuffles have taken place. Particularly in the departments of Lima and Junín, protesters and state security forces have clashed violently; a state of emergency temporarily imposed on 04.04.22 with curfews in the capital Lima and the port city of Callao was lifted after only a few hours. Up to 06.04.22, at least five deaths have been confirmed by the government in events related to the protests, none of which was directly associated with police violence. Economic measures such as tax cuts on petrol and a minimum wage increase have not succeeded in putting an end to the protests.

## **Russian Federation**

### **Registration of several foreign NGOs revoked**

On 08.04.22, the Russian justice ministry withdrew the registration of 15 foreign human rights organisations and political foundations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Heinrich Böll and Konrad Adenauer Foundations, which are now effectively banned from operating in Russia. The decision taken was due to “violations of the current legislation of the Russian Federation”, without providing details. International observers fear that the increasing loss of foreign cooperation partners, who had been able to provide at least a limited degree of protection, will further increase repression against the remaining domestic civil society actors.

### **Increased denunciations and subsequent prosecution**

The independent Russian portal NGO OWD-Info reports that the number of cases in which private individuals or state employees were denounced by citizens has increased significantly since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. International media have described several incidents, among other things, in which teachers were reported to the police by students or parents for critical statements on the acts of war and have subsequently been dismissed from their jobs and sentenced primarily to fines.

## **Sri Lanka**

### **Ongoing protests, ruling coalition loses majority in parliament**

Protests in the island state are continuing daily all over the country (cf. BN of 04.04.22), with demonstrators demanding new elections and the president’s resignation, shouting the slogans "Gota go home" and "Gota must go". On 08.04.22, security forces used tear gas and water cannons to prevent around 4,000 students from entering the parliament building. On 05.04.22, the coalition lost its majority in parliament when at least 41 MPs left the government coalition. On 06.04.22, the president lifted the state of emergency declared five days earlier. According to reports, the country's rupee has become the world's worst-valued currency at present. So far, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has rejected blame for the economic crisis and ruled out resigning. Meanwhile, medical associations warn

of dramatic effects on the health system, as there is already a shortage of important medicines. Independent human rights experts from the UN have called on the government to guarantee the fundamental rights of freedom of assembly and expression during peaceful protests.

## **Sudan**

### **Ongoing demonstrations**

On 06.04.22, the third anniversary of Omar al-Bashir's removal from power and the anniversary of the 1985 popular uprising against former president Jafaar Nimeiri, crowds of protesters gathered again throughout the country against the military government. These were also the first demonstrations during the fasting month of Ramadan. Reports say that security forces closed several bridges in Khartoum in the run-up to the announced rallies in order to disrupt or prevent the demonstrations. Also, security forces used tear gas against the protesters in several cities. In Khartoum, the army headquarters was secured by barbed wire, several armoured vehicles, and soldiers. The Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors reports that one individual was killed by the use of live ammunition during the protest rallies in the capital, bringing to 94 the number of people killed by security forces during demonstrations since the military coup of October 2021. Furthermore, security forces stormed a hospital and used tear gas inside the building, the committee stated.

In addition, there have been frequent reports on the security forces' actions against media representatives and journalists, with at least 36 radio stations closed down in the first two weeks after the military coup of October 2021 alone. From October 2021 to March 2022, the organisation Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor registered a total of 55 attacks against various media outlets and their staff.

## **Syria**

### **Northeast: Artillery attack wounds US soldiers**

Four members of the US military were lightly wounded in an attack by two volleys of artillery fire on a US base in Deir ez-Zor governorate on 07.04.22. These were the first attacks since January 2022 on the military camp, where several hundred forces are stationed. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the attacks were carried out from a position where Iranian-backed militias are said to be present.

### **Northwest: Four schoolchildren killed in attack**

On 04.04.22, four pupils were killed on their way to school when government forces attacked the rebel-held town of Ma'ret al Na'san in the north-east of Idlib governorate. At the same time, Russian forces carried out air strikes in the south of Idlib governorate.

The pupils killed were in seventh, eighth and ninth grade and were fatally shot just 50 metres from the school, school officials report. In recent months, Ma'ret al Na'san has been targeted several times by both government attacks and Russian air strikes. Together with Turkish-backed forces, the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, which exercises control in the area, has carried out retaliatory strikes against Syrian government positions. There has been no information on casualties so far.

## **Tunisia**

### **Protests against President Saied**

On 10.04.22, over a thousand Tunisian citizens took to the streets in Tunis in protest against President Saied. The rally was organised by a movement called "Citizens Against the Coup" together with the Islamic-inspired Ennahda party, which has dominated Tunisia's post-revolutionary politics and the recently dissolved parliament. In the aftermath of the dissolution of parliament, Tunisia's justice minister launched a judicial investigation against more than half of the MPs who had participated in the online session (cf. BN of 04.04.22).

### **Change of voting mechanism**

On 06.04.22, President Saied announced amendments to the electoral law for the parliamentary elections scheduled for 19.12.22. Voting would take place in two rounds, and voters would vote for individuals rather than lists as in previous elections.

## **Turkey**

### **Termination of scholarship because of participation in feminist march**

The state-run general directorate of credits and dormitories Agency (KYK), operating subject to the ministry of youth and sports, has cancelled a student scholarship after she participated in a feminist rally in Antalya province on 08.03.22. The student had been arrested during the demonstration but released after only five hours. In a letter dated 04.04.22, the KYK accused the student of being involved in anarchist and terrorist incidents and stated that they had stopped her state student loan for these reasons.

### **Amendment of the electoral legislation**

On 06.04.22, the amendment to the electoral law passed in March 2022 came into force (cf. BN of 27.03.22). The Turkish parliament thus approved changes in the law reducing from ten to seven percent the threshold for a party to enter parliament. Another amendment stipulates that in the next elections, members of parliament will be allocated based purely on the vote share of each party in a given district. The current system allocates MPs according to the vote share won by each electoral alliance before dividing them up in line with the vote share of each party within that bloc. This has allowed small parties to win seats in constituencies where they secured only a small share of the vote.

### **Annual report on prisoners and prisons in Europe**

On 06.04.22, the Council of Europe published its annual report on prisoners and prisons in Europe, stating that in January 2021, Turkey had the second highest prison rate after Russia among the Council's 47 member states. According to the SPACE survey (Statistiques Pénales Annuelles du Conseil de l'Europe), which is the annual report on the use of imprisonment and probation in Council of Europe member states, Turkey recorded 325 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants, just behind Russia (328 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants). According to the report, Turkey ranks in the "very high" category for its detention rate, which is 25 percent higher than the European average. With 108 inmates per 100 available places, Turkey ranked sixth among the 47 countries with regard to the assessment of overcrowding. The ratio of inmates to one prison staff member was given as 3.9, which is the highest of all countries listed in the Council of Europe report. A total of 397 children in Turkey were living with their mothers in prisons in 2021, the report says.

## **Uganda**

### **Journalist abducted and mistreated**

Local media report that journalist Eric James Sawani was kidnapped and beat up by unknown individuals in Bukwo District (Eastern Uganda). Shortly before, he had broadcast an anti-corruption feature on his radio show. Police suspect that people from the area involved in corruption are behind the attack. Sawani is currently receiving medical treatment.

## **Ukraine / Russian Federation**

### **Humanitarian situation and war in Ukraine**

After the military withdrawal of Russian forces from the areas of Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy, the war in eastern Ukraine has intensified and the humanitarian situation has deteriorated further, among other things due to the ongoing destruction of civilian infrastructure. On 06.04.22, the Ukrainian government called on civilians in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions to evacuate as quickly as possible in view of the military escalation. On 08.04.22 rocket attacks on the railway station of the town of Kramatorsk in Donetsk Oblast killed 57 people and injured 114

others who were waiting for evacuation trains, Ukrainian sources report. In Kharkiv Oblast, ten civilians were killed on 10.04.22 following artillery fire and rocket strikes, the regional governor stated. Media report that the embattled port city of Mariupol has been largely captured by Russian forces, with many civilians still inside. Since the beginning of the military encirclement of Mariupol at the end of February 2022, the city has been largely cut off from humanitarian support. Evacuation buses and private vehicles continue to evacuate civilians from Mariupol and Berdyansk to the city of Zaporozhye, among others, along humanitarian corridors opened on a daily basis; there have also been reports of new humanitarian corridors opened to the city of Bakhmut from several localities in the Donetsk region. According to Ukrainian data, 2,824 civilians were evacuated on 10.04.22 via such corridors. The Ukrainian prosecutor general's office informs that more than 1,200 dead bodies have so far been found in the area around the capital Kyiv in the course of ongoing clean-up operations; shortly after the withdrawal of Russian forces from the area, the bodies of numerous civilians were found in the town of Bucha (cf. BN of 04.04.22). The prosecutor general's office has announced to investigate the events as possible war crimes committed by Russian forces. On 06.04.22, the Kyiv city administration informed that 167 residential buildings as well as 44 schools and 26 kindergartens were damaged by rocket fire in Kyiv; civilians who had fled the city were urged not to return for the time being since new attacks were expected. According to Ukrainian data of 09.04.22, a total of 928 educational institutions have suffered bombing and shelling so far, and 84 of them have been destroyed completely. The Ukrainian border guard agency has stated that since the beginning of the Russian military invasion, almost 2,200 men between the ages of 18 and 60, who are subject to military service under the current martial law, have been prevented from leaving the country. According to WHO data, 108 attacks on medical facilities with 73 fatalities have been documented in Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian military invasion. The UN informed on 09.04.22 that 1,766 civilians have been killed (among them at least 284 women and 139 children) and another 2,383 injured in connection with the war so far, with the majority of the documented civilian deaths caused by the use of explosive weapons systems. According to the latest UNHCR figures, more than 4.5 million people have fled Ukraine so far (as of 09.04.22), and there are currently around 7.1 million internally displaced people in Ukraine. On 09.04.22, President Zelenskyy reiterated his continued willingness to find a solution with the Russian Federation. Despite several rounds of negotiations, some of them mediated by Turkey, no concrete progress towards a ceasefire has been made so far. Ukraine severed formal diplomatic relations with the Russian Federation when the Russian military invasion began.

## **United Arab Emirates**

### **Death sentence imposed on Israeli woman**

On 05.04.22, an Israeli citizen was sentenced to death by a court in Dubai for possession of more than half a kilogram of cocaine. The UAE retain the death penalty for non-violent acts, including drug offences. The last execution of the death penalty had taken place in 2017; in many cases, the death sentence has subsequently been commuted to imprisonment.

## **Vietnam**

### **Journalist sentenced to prison**

On 05.04.22, a journalist who had criticised the authorities' handling of a corruption case that he had previously uncovered was sentenced to three and a half year in prison by a court in Ho Chi Minh City. He was convicted under Article 331 of the Vietnamese Penal Code for "abuse of democratic freedoms". The journalist had been arrested in April 2021.

## **Yemen**

### **Resignation of President Hadi**

On 07.04.22, the president of Yemen's internationally recognised government Abedrabbo Hadi announced to delegate his powers to a presidential council and thus effectively resign from office. Vice President Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar will also step down from his position. Hadi's resignation was one of the core demands of the Houthis to

enter peace negotiations. Shortly afterwards, the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates announced that they would provide a total of around USD 3 billion for Yemen. In his first official address on 08.04.22, the chairman of the new Presidential Council, Rashad al-Alimi, announced a peace process to end the civil war.

Meanwhile, the two-month ceasefire that came into effect on 02.04.22 has led to a significant decrease in fighting; however, ceasefire violations have been reported around the city of Marib in the governorate of the same name.

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