



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

25. April 2022

Afghanistan

Security situation: Series of attacks by the Islamic State of Khorasan Province ISKP

Within a few days, a series of large attacks was launched mainly in mosques, with many dead and injured. On 17.04.21, the IS had announced on its Telegram channel worldwide revenge attacks (also in the Khorasan region) for the murder of their leader al-Qurashi and spokesman al-Muhajer in Syria in early February 2022. The BBC has reported that the ISKP attacks in Afghanistan are part of this revenge operation. On 22.04.22, at least 30 people were killed and about 43 others injured in a bomb attack at the Sunni Maulavi Sekandar Sufi mosque in the Imam Sahib district of Kunduz province. According to the news portal Tolonews, the ISKP has claimed responsibility for the attack. On 21.04.22, a bomb attack on a Shiite mosque in Mazar-e Sharif killed 30 people and injured about another 80. The mosque was mainly attended by ethnic Hazaras; the ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack. On the same day, ISKP launched an attack in Kunduz province, leaving four dead and 18 injured. On 19.04.22, two attacks were carried out on a boys' school and another educational institution in Kabul, in the Shiite Hazara neighbourhood of Dasht-e Barchi, with at least 22 dead and many injured. ISKP has carried out similar attacks, but has not claimed responsibility for these two assaults. The Taliban have condemned the attacks, but apparently obstructed reports in Kabul, access to hospitals and relief operations such as blood donations by relatives.

Security situation: Pakistani drone attacks in Afghanistan

In the night to 16.04.22, Pakistani airstrikes targeted the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorist group in Afghanistan's Khost and Kunar provinces, killing at least 40 civilians (among them women and children). According to the Pakistani military, the operation was successful. Pakistan accuses the Afghan Taliban of not taking action against the TTP, who apparently operate from Afghanistan. For the first time, the TTP had announced a spring offensive against the Pakistani army and had carried out an attack against security forces in Pakistan the week before. The Taliban have announced that they would not allow any invasions from neighbouring states, but that they would try to find a diplomatic solution to resolve the tensions with Pakistan over the drone attacks.

Persecution situation: detentions and killings

On 17.04.22 it was reported that former officer Qasim Qaim was tortured and killed by the Taliban for links to the National Resistance Front (NRF). On 20.04.22, Human Rights Watch called on the Taliban to release the head of Herat's women's prison, who has been detained since October 2021. The New York Times and Hasht-e Subh newspapers report up to 500 former government members killed by the Taliban since they took power in Kabul, Nangarhar, Herat, Uruzgan, Takhar, Khost, Helmand, Balkh, Ghazni, Kunduz and Badakhshan provinces. The Taliban have denied these reports. On 14.04.22, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project (ACLED) informed that the Taliban were responsible for the majority of violence against civilians (53 percent) from the time they took power in 2021 to March 2022. Another 39 percent of violence targeting civilians recorded by ACLED were committed by unidentified armed groups, and only 6 percent by the ISKP.

Benin

Dead in attack

Five military personnel were killed when a military vehicle triggered an IED in Pendjari National Park in the north of the country bordering Burkina Faso on 11.04.22.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

High Representative repeals law

On 12.04.22, German politician Christian Schmidt, head of the UN Office of High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, suspended a law on state real estate in the Republika Srpska RS which had been passed a week earlier in the Bosnian Serb assembly and provides for the transfer of state property from Bosnia to the Serb entity. The law is part of the separatist policy of the Bosnian Serb ruling party SNSD under its leader Milorad Dodik (cf. BN of 14.02.22). Schmidt stated that the law violates the constitution of the state as a whole and the Dayton Agreement and will remain suspended until its legality is reviewed by the constitutional court of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Burkina Faso

Protest rally dispersed

On 23.04.22, police used tear gas to break up an unauthorised protest march in Ougadougou. The protesters demanded an end to French involvement in the country in the fight against extremist groups. They also called on the government to cooperate with Russian forces instead. Several people were arrested.

Tackling extremists: the military's record

The military has stated that between 15.03.22 and 15.04.22, around 100 members of extremist groups were killed or incapacitated in operations by the Forces de Défense et de Sécurité FDS (military and gendarmerie) and the vigilante group Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie VDP in the Centre-Nord, Est and Sahel regions.

Fatal attacks, assault

On 24.04.22, unknown gunmen killed 15 security forces and civilians in attacks on military units in Gaskindé and Pobe Mengao (Sahel region). On 16.04.22, a vehicle of a convoy in the Taparko mining area hit an IED near Ouanobian (Centre-North region), leaving two police officers of the Compagnie Républicaine de Sécurité CRS dead.

DR Congo

Opposition leaders complain about repressive measures against opposition, media, and human rights actors

According to a press report of 10.04.22 the leader of the opposition party Engagement pour la Citoyenneté et le Développement ECiDé and outgoing chairman of the opposition platform LAMUKA, Martin Fayulu, has criticised the disregard for human rights, including the arrest of media workers, human rights defenders and political activists in the north-western province of Équateur. Media reports say that on 22.04.22, police forces violently broke up a sit-in demonstration staged by ECiDé and LAMUKA in front of the People's Palace in the capital of Kinshasa, in connection with the electoral law amendment bill currently under controversy in parliament. According to ECiDé, the disproportionate police violence resulted in 30 people being injured, some of them seriously. Several protesters were arrested and the ECiDé party headquarters was vandalised by police forces. In view of the dissemination on social media of images incriminating the police forces, an investigation into the incidents was announced by the police who had justified their harsh action by underlining that the protesters were armed.

In a statement of 20.04.22 Emmanuel Shadary, permanent secretary of the party of former president Joseph Kabila (Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie PPRD), condemned the increase in restrictions on civil liberties and arbitrary arrests of leaders, members and allies of the PPRD party. Most recently, Momo Mulapu, head of communications and media at the provincial executive committee of the PPRD, was arrested for political reasons

despite being in poor health by the National Intelligence Service ANR in the capital Kolwezi of the southern Lualaba province. Mulapu has been held in incommunicado detention since his transfer to the capital Kinshasa.

ANR maintains unconstitutional practices; convictions of ANR members

According to the UN-backed Radio Okapi, the human rights organisation La Voix des Sans Voix VSV urged the ANR to stop its "totalitarian and degrading practices" in a statement on 14.04.22, accusing the ANR of unlawfully detaining two people in "prolonged" administrative detention without charge, each in connection with the vague criminal charge of endangering state security. According to the defence, the accused are being held in poor and degrading detention conditions. Despite the reform efforts of the Tshisekedi government, the ANR, which had served as an instrument of repression and suppression under former President Joseph Kabila, has repeatedly been criticised for arbitrarily arresting and detaining people with no outside contacts or defence opportunities (cf. BN. of 21.03.22). In April 2022, media reported on the arrest of opposition activist Momo Mulapu (PPRD) and of journalist Georges Balingene in Masisi (North Kivu province), who had been intimidated for his reporting, among other things. On 13.04.22, minister of hydrocarbons Didier Budimbu Ntubuanga was the first member of the current government to be temporarily arrested by the ANR, together with another individual directly associated with President Tshisekedi (cf. BN of 21.03.22).

Radio Okapi reports that on 12.04.22, a court in Gemena (Sud-Ubangi) sentenced an ANR member to ten years' imprisonment for attempted arbitrary arrest, grievous bodily harm and damage to property, among other charges. The convict, together with three co-accused fugitive ANR members, had tortured three unwanted lawyers and vandalised the building of the local prosecutor's office. Radio Okapi cited the chair of the Gemena bar association saying that even the judicial body was subject to interference by the ANR. Another media outlet reports that on 03.03.22, the Lubumbashi district court (Haut-Katanga), sentenced four ANR members to seven years imprisonment each for depriving a judge of his liberty and torturing him. The judge had wanted to interrogate three ANR members who had been arrested and accused of acting together in attacking a woman.

Provinces under state of emergency: NGOs demand end to repression and respect for human rights

In a joint communiqué dated 13.04.22, a total of 37 civil society organisations and NGOs called attention to the deteriorating human rights situation and the ongoing massacres in the two eastern Congolese provinces of North Kivu and Ituri since the state of siege came into force in May 2021. This is in line with Human Rights Watch's latest assessment of the situation of 22.02.22 (cf. BN of 28.03.22). According to the communiqué, people critical of the siege were subject to arbitrary arrest, prosecution, physical violence, and intimidation, and there was evidence of the arrest of dozens of activists, media workers, opposition members and even two parliamentarians, all of whom had peacefully voiced their opinions about the security situation and the state of siege. Police and security forces were severely restricting freedoms and using excessive force and harshness against protest actions. The communiqué called for the release of all those arrested or convicted for criticising the state of siege. Members of the armed and security forces who had committed or participated in extrajudicial killings, torture or other human rights violations should be held criminally accountable, the press statement concluded.

Egypt

Well-known economist died in state custody

As was reported by the authorities, well-known economist and member of the Reform and Development Party Ayman Hadhoud had been arrested on 06.02.22 on charges of attempted burglary; after being detained by the police, he was sent to a psychiatric hospital by the security forces and died of chronic heart disease shortly thereafter. Media have reported however, that the authorities did not inform Hadhoud's family of his passing until a month later. Human Rights Watch has called on the authorities to release the autopsy report. His family, as well as human rights organisations, fear that Hadhoud may have been tortured in police custody.

41 people released from custody

On the occasion of the upcoming end of the Muslim fasting month, 41 detainees were released, media reports say. Among them are apparently at least six political prisoners who were arrested in the past for suspected membership in a terrorist organisation and/or spreading false news on social media.

Influencer's sentence reduced

A court has reduced to three years TikTok influencer Haneen Hossam's ten-year prison sentence for human trafficking; however, the fine of EGP 200,000 remains (EUR 10,031; as of 25.04.22). Along with another influencer, Haneen Hossam had first been sentenced to two years in prison in 2020, after the two women had shared online videos that authorities said attacked society's values. However, the two women were acquitted by an appeals court in January 2021. They were later charged and convicted of human trafficking.

Ghana

Fulani villagers killed by unidentified gunmen

On 13.04.22, unidentified individuals killed up to nine members of ethnic Fulani (also: Ful, Peulh) in Zakoli (also: Zacholi) in Yendi District (Northern Region), as has been reported by various media report. Unconfirmed reports suspect that it might have been an act of retaliation after a robbery.

There are frequent conflicts between nomadic Fulani herdsmen and local peasants, with Fulani often being blamed for banditry. In turn, ethnic Fulani feel marginalised in Ghanaian society. Observers fear that jihadist groups active in the Sahel might exploit this situation to expand their spheres of influence and recruit fighters among the Fulani.

Guinea

Former President Condé released

Former President Alpha Condé who had been ousted on 05.09.21 and returned from treatment abroad on 08.04.22 (cf. BN of 11.04.22), has been released from house arrest. This news item was reported by the media with reference to a communiqué of the ruling junta dated 22.04.22. After his overthrow, he had initially been held in an unidentified place and was then placed under house arrest (cf. BN of 06.12.21).

The reason for his release is unclear. Condé's party, the Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée RPG, had demanded that he be set free on 15.04.22; at the same time the party had announced its withdrawal from the "Assises Nationales" forum, which is scheduled to last until 29.04.22 (cf. BN of 11.04.22). In the meantime, two former ministers of Condé were arrested on 21.04.21 and another one was placed under judicial supervision. Like former Prime Minister Ibrahima Kassory Fofana and three other ex-ministers before (see BN 11.04.22), they are accused of embezzlement of public funds and other offences.

No timetable for return to civil order

A deadline set by the Economic Community of West African States ECOWAS to the junta and transitional government expires on 25.04.22. If no timetable for a return to civil order is presented by then, further sanctions are to be imposed. Media reports say that on 15.04.22, the minister of territorial administration and decentralisation presented ten steps that would have to be fulfilled beforehand: these include a census, the establishment of the electoral roll, the drafting of a new constitution, a constitutional referendum, elections at different levels and, as a last step, presidential elections. However, the minister has not linked these steps to a timetable. Political parties suspect that the junta is playing for time.

India

Kashmir: Military operations against insurgents; Prime Minister Modi on visit

On 22.04.22, six suspected insurgents and one Indian soldier were killed in operations by security forces in the Sunjwan garrison town near Jammu city. According to military sources, the suspected were planning an attack.

On 24.04.22, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited for his first public event in the region since the Indian government had stripped Kashmir of its semi-autonomous status in 2019 and split it into two separate, directly governed Union Territories. In an address, the prime minister mentioned the gradual democratic developments emerging in the troubled region. Opposition members, meanwhile, complain that the disputed region is effectively without an elected government. District and local elections had been held in 2020, but local assemblies have no power to make laws in the region. Moreover, the security situation remains tense, with frequent firefights between

insurgents and security forces during military operations. Also, attacks by suspected rebels on migrant workers and local Hindu faith members have increased in recent weeks.

Amnesty International (AI) criticises collective punishment of Muslim minority

Last week, the authorities demolished houses and shops of members of the Muslim community in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat ruled by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and accused them of violence during a Hindu festival. The incident followed riots during the Ram Navmi festival earlier this month when believers of the Hindu faith usually celebrate the birth of their god Ram with processions. This year, however, saffron-clad Hindu men marched through Muslim neighbourhoods with swords, sticks and guns, chanting slogans, playing loud music in front of mosques, and attacking houses and shops. In Khargone district in Madhya Pradesh, violence erupted after a crowd set fire to around ten houses and a mosque. In the ensuing clashes, Muslim believers allegedly hurled stones, leaving at least two people dead. Similar riots were reported in other Indian states. The home minister of Madhya Pradesh subsequently blamed the Muslim minority for the escalation of violence. As a result, authorities in Khargone district demolished about 50 houses, most of which belonged to the Muslim minority. Similar demolitions were reported in Prime Minister Modi's home state of Gujarat. According to AI, this amounts to collective punishment of the minority community. In a petition before the supreme court, the Muslim party Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind stated that the policy of using bulldozers was initiated under the pretext of preventing crimes in BJP-ruled states with the aim of harming religious minorities, especially followers of the Muslim faith.

Iran

Prison conditions: Report on 96 deaths in custody within twelve years

A report by Amnesty International (AI) published on 12.04.22 documents at least 96 deaths of detainees from 2010 to 2022 due to denial or delay of access to essential medical care. The report details the circumstances surrounding the deaths of 92 men and four women in 30 prisons in 18 provinces. Among the causes were lack of medical care and deliberate denial of hospital emergency transfers for prisoners. For example, 26 ailing persons died as a result of delayed transfer to hospital. In four cases, prisoners died in solitary confinement or quarantine without basic medical care. 22 of the registered deaths occurred in the central prison of Orumiyeh (Western Azerbaijan). According to the AI report, 20 of the 96 people were imprisoned for politically motivated reasons, such as violations of national security. The human rights organisation describes the 96 documented cases as intentional killings.

Religious minorities: Arrest of a Baha'i woman - sentences against converts

Media report that on 12.04.22, a member of the Baha'i religious community was arrested during a court hearing in Tehran and taken to an unknown location. The woman is the niece of a well-known Iranian film director. On 18.04.22, her son stated that the reason for her arrest and her whereabouts remained unknown. The son and his wife had also been briefly detained by security forces in 2021 on charges of propaganda against the regime and conspiracy against national security. They had been released after paying bail.

Citing Christian human rights organisations, foreign media report on the sentencing of three converts to Christianity to five years imprisonment each and fines totalling 18 million Tuman (approx. 556 EUR; as of 22.04.22). The Revolutionary Court in Rasht (Gilan province) convicted the men of propaganda activities against the regime, founding a deviant religious association with international connections and proselytising. According to their lawyer, the defendants announced that they would appeal the verdicts. It was also reported that two female converts have begun their two-year prison sentences in Tehran and Rasht. The women had previously been convicted of acts against national security by founding and leading an evangelical Christian church, engaging in house church activities, and promoting Zionist Christianity.

Several goods smugglers wounded by border guards, some of them fatally

Citing Kurdish human rights organisations, foreign media report that on 17. and 18.04.22 at least six goods smugglers were injured or killed by direct fire from Iranian border guards in the western border areas of Sardasht (West Azerbaijan province) and Nosud (Kermanshah province). Within a week, 15 people have already been wounded, the reports say. Similar incidents had been reported by Kurdish human rights organisations at the end of 2021 (cf. BN of 29.11.21). The Iranian authorities regard people who carry goods on foot over partly impassable

mountain trails as smugglers. Human rights organisations, however, describe the transport of goods as the only source of income for many families in the Kurdish border areas. A plan announced by parliament in 2021 on how to deal with goods smugglers in the future has not yet been adopted.

Short-term detentions before protest rallies

According to foreign media reports, 70 people were briefly arrested in Tehran on 21.04.22 in the course of nationwide protest rallies staged by teachers. Referring to information from a spokesperson for the teachers' union, it was reported that these arrests were intended to systematically prevent gatherings. After several hours in detention by the security forces, all 70 people were released, according to concurring media reports. Since December 2021, teaching staff have frequently organised protest rallies, demanding adjustments to their salaries and pensions. Criticism has also been voiced against the arrests of trade union representatives on previous occasions (cf. BN of 07.02.22).

Iraq

Combat operations against the Islamic State

With the beginning of the fasting month of Ramadan on 1 April, IS militants have started their annual Ramadan offensive, but with little success so far, as the group has lost a lot of support.

On 19.04.22, a skirmish occurred in Diyala province with a Sunni tribal unit of the Hashd al-Ashayiri tribal militia, which is incorporated into the Iraqi armed forces. Three defenders died; the same day also saw attacks against an Iraqi army unit and against the Shiite Hashd Ash-Shaabi (PMU), but no casualties were recorded.

On 21.04.22, an Iraqi F-16 attacked an IS position in Salah-ad-Din. According to the Iraqi defence ministry, four IS insurgents were killed in the operation.

On 22.04.22, a civilian vehicle hit an improvised explosive device in Khanaqin district of Diyala province; at least two people were killed in the explosion. The trap appears to have been set up by IS insurgents.

Turkish attacks against the PKK in northern Iraq

Since 18.04.22, the Turkish military has again been carrying out air strikes and military operations against the PKK in northern Iraq. According to the Turkish defence ministry, four Turkish soldiers have been killed in the fighting so far, and 45 PKK members are reported to have been killed. The operation appears to aim at closing a land corridor used by the PKK. Iraq has repeatedly protested against the Turkish incursion into its territory.

Kyrgyzstan / Tajikistan

Gunfire on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border

On 12.04.22, a new exchange of fire on the disputed border between the two states left one Tajik border guard dead; two Kyrgyz border guards and four Kyrgyz civilians were injured in the incident. The governor of the Kyrgyz region of Batken informed on 13.04.22 that both states had agreed to withdraw soldiers from the border area. For years, there have been tensions and clashes in the border area of the two states.

Lebanon

Impact of the crisis on children's health

On 20.04.22, UNICEF published the report "A worsening health crisis for children" on the impacts of Lebanon's multidimensional crisis on children's health. According to the report, the vaccination rate for recommended vaccinations for children has dropped by about 30 percent over the last year from an already low level; many families cannot afford to travel to the nearest health facility. About 50 percent of families were unable to obtain the medicines they needed. The rate of children without access to health care has now risen to 34 percent. The number of children who had to skip a meal has risen to 53 percent, the report says.

Boat accident off Tripoli coast

On 23.04.22, a boat carrying about 60 people to Cyprus capsized off the coast of Tripoli. The boat was stopped by two Lebanese navy vessels. According to the navy, it capsized during a manoeuvre by the boat captain; however, several survivors have stated that one of the navy vessels had rammed the boat. 48 people were rescued, six bodies have been recovered so far, among them a child. The boat accident led to protests in Tripoli the following day. The demonstrators demanded accountability for the actions of the navy, who in turn pointed out in a statement that the transport of so many people on unsuitable boats was illegal per se.

Libya

Violent clashes in Zawiya

On 23. and 24.04.22, two armed groups clashed in the western Libyan town of Zawiya, leaving at least one individual killed and several injured, and the local oil refinery damaged, reports say.

Several oil fields and/or oil production facilities closed

The state-owned oil company NOC informed on 19.04.22 that it had to close two oil export terminals and was not able to fully meet its contractual obligations for oil deliveries. The interruptions at several production facilities in the south and east were caused by a group of individuals who want to put pressure on the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU) and its prime minister to hand over power to the Government of National Stability (GNS) elected by the parliament in Tobruk in March 2022. Libya's economy, scarred by years of armed conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, is heavily dependent on oil exports. Already in the past, important infrastructure such as oil fields and water supply facilities have been closed or manipulated and used as political leverage.

No victims in IS attack

The UN has informed that no casualties were reported after a car bomb attack launched by IS insurgents on units of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces LAAF in the southwestern town of Umm al-Aranib on 19.04.22. Islamist groups such as IS have been using the southern parts of the country as a retreat area and have carried out isolated attacks on security forces and checkpoints in the past year.

Mali

Several attacks on military bases in central Mali

The Malian military has informed that six soldiers were killed and at least 20 others injured in three attacks on military bases in the towns of Sévaré, Bapho and Niono on 24.04. 22. Apparently, the attacks were carried out using vehicles loaded with explosives attacks. Katiba Macina, an Islamist group allied with the terrorist militia al-Qaida and active in Mali, has claimed responsibility for the assaults.

Myanmar

Fighting in several parts of the country, more villages burnt down in the north-west

Media report that between 02.04. and 17.04.22, the Myanmar military Tatmadaw, supported by the pro-military militia Pyu Saw Htee, clashed with ethnic armies or People's Defence Forces PDF in Kayah, Kayin and Rakhine states as well as in Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing and Yangon regions. At least 28 civilians and 14 PDF members were killed in the incidents. Anti-junta forces reported to have killed around 70 military personnel. In Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing, the Tatmadaw again burnt down dozens of villages; hundreds of homes fell victim to the flames. Since the coup on 01.02.21, the military has destroyed over 8,000 civilian buildings in the country, most of them in the northwest (as of 01.04.22). The number of displaced people in the area exceeded 300,000 for the first time in March 2022. In total, 566,100 people (representing 1 percent of the population) became refugees as a result of the violence and insecurity caused by the coup (as of 11.04.22).

On the occasion of the Buddhist New Year festival Thingyan, the junta released 1,619 prisoners from several prisons on 17.04.22. Of the current 10,290 political prisoners, none were pardoned.

Niger

Dead in attacks

On 12.04.22, four military personnel died in an attack by unidentified individuals on an armed forces position in Djado (Agadez region). On the same day, another attack on a police station in Petelkole (Tillabéri region) killed seven members of the police.

Nigeria

Middle-Belt: High number of victims in attacks on villages

In central Plateau state, unidentified gunmen attacked several villages in the Kanam region on 10.04.22, killing over 100 people and abducting dozens, according to media reports. Eyewitnesses report that the perpetrators rode on motorbikes through the villages, shooting indiscriminately with machine guns. On 12.04.22, mass funerals were held in some of the affected villages. In Benue State, also in central Nigeria, at least 23 people were reportedly killed in a similar attack on 11.04.22, among them a traditional ruler. With regard to these attacks, the organisations Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) and Middle Belt Forum (MBF) warned about the effects of the precarious security situation in the region. Unlike in many other parts of the country, there is no clearly dominant ethnic group in the Middle Belt zone between northern and southern Nigeria.

Middle Belt: Deaths in Islamist attacks on bars and police station

Media report that on 23.04.22, the Islamic State West Africa Province ISWAP claimed responsibility for deadly attacks on bars in Taraba State where, on 19.04.22, an explosive device detonated in a bar and killed at least twelve people and injured many others. Eleven people were injured in a similar attack on 22.04.22. In the past, the federal state bordering Cameroon was not among the areas mainly affected by attacks by Islamist groups. Reportedly, ISWAP has also claimed responsibility for an attack on a police station in Kogi State in which three policemen were killed on 23.04.22.

Success report in the fight against human trafficking

Nigeria's National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons NAPTIP has rescued a total of 1,444 victims of human trafficking since 2021. This is according to media reports citing data released on 21.04.22 from the NAPTIP section called Uyo Zone. Other achievements of this section during this period include the convictions of 52 traffickers and 11 other court cases still ongoing, the reports said. Among other factors, the Uyo Zone commander attributes these results to the good cooperation with other authorities present at the Nigerian borders. Most recently, a spectacular operation carried out in cooperation with Nigerian authorities in early April 2022 led to the liberation of 48 victims of human trafficking in neighbouring Niger (among them two Ghanaian nationals), as was reported by the media. NAPTIP had been created in 2003 by the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act. The NAPTIP Uyo Zonal Command, established in 2005, is based in Akwa Ibom State and combats human trafficking and child labour in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River and Rivers states, among others.

Pakistan

Shehbaz Sharif elected Prime Minister

On 11.04.22, Pakistan's national assembly elected incumbent opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif of the conservative Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as Pakistan's new prime minister after a vote of no confidence in Imran Khan, who has been in office since 2018. Shehbaz Sharif is the younger brother of three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who had been convicted on corruption charges. The no-confidence motion, which required 172 votes in the 342-seat parliament to pass, was supported by 174 politicians from a broad coalition ranging from leftist to Islamist.

Sharif had previously ruled Punjab province for a long time. He can currently rely on the support of the Bhutto family, the second major political clan in Pakistan. In principle, there is political rivalry between the PML-N and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who is the son of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and Pakistan's eleventh president Asif Ali Zardari. In response to the election results, ousted prime minister Imran Khan mobilised tens of thousands of supporters of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf PTI party for mass protests in several major cities. On 19.04.22, the new government of the party alliance was sworn in. The next general election are to be held by October 2023.

TTP attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; increased pressure on Kabul

On 11.04.22, five security personnel were killed and four others injured in a grenade attack on a police vehicle in Dera Ismail Khan district in north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The banned group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for the attack which was launched not far from South Waziristan, an area on the border with Afghanistan that had once been the group's headquarters. On 23.04.22, a Pakistan Army border post in north-western North Waziristan came under fire from Afghanistan; three soldiers were killed in the incident. According to military sources, an unspecified number of militants were killed in a subsequent firefight. In recent months, the TTP has increased attacks on security forces in the northwest.

In response to the high number of attacks on security forces in the north-west, Pakistan has increased pressure on Kabul to take action against terrorist activities by the TTP on Afghan territory. On 16.04.22, the Pakistani military launched an airstrike on the Afghan border provinces of Khost and Kunar, killing more than three dozen civilians, as was reported by eyewitnesses and a spokesperson for the Afghan Taliban.

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

West Bank / East Jerusalem: Riots and several deaths in clashes with the military

Several Palestinians were killed in the ongoing struggle between the Palestinian inhabitants in the West Bank and the Israeli military. On 11.04.22, a man was killed in the West Bank after throwing firebombs at Israeli vehicles in the West Bank, as was reported by the military.

Also on 11.04.22, two Israelis were wounded when they visited biblical figure Joseph's tomb which had been vandalised by Palestinians the day before.

The Palestinian health ministry has reported that on 13.04.22, four Palestinians were killed, among them a 14-year-old, in various incidents related to increased Israeli military activity in the West Bank. 18 others were wounded.

On 14.04.22, two more people were killed in clashes with the military in the northern West Bank town of Jenin, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

On 15.04.22, ahead of the Muslim Friday prayer, Palestinians and the Israeli military clashed on the grounds of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Israeli military stormed both the compound and the mosque. More than 150 Palestinians were wounded by rubber bullets and stun grenades. The Israeli military reported hundreds of arrests and three military personnel wounded by stones.

On 17.04.22, a total of 17 Palestinians were wounded inside and five others outside the Al Aqsa Mosque compound after new violence had broken out there when the Israeli military entered the compound in preparation for a routine visit to the holy site by Jews. Visits of this kind are seen as a provocation by many Palestinians.

On 19.04.22, thousands of Israelis marched to the dismantled unauthorised Homesh settlement in the West Bank and demanded its official reconstruction (cf. BN of 03.01.22). The military closed roads to separate the march and Palestinian residents. No official permission was given. At least eight Palestinians were wounded in the ensuing clashes between the residents and the military.

On 20.04.22, several hundred Israelis took part in a flag march inside Jerusalem. The march was blocked by Israeli police before reaching the Damascus Gate and meeting Palestinians near the Al-Aqsa Mosque, due to fears of a new escalation of violence.

On 21.04.22, new clashes broke out around the Al-Aqsa Mosque when large numbers of Palestinians barricaded themselves inside the mosque and Israeli military used rubber bullets and stun grenades to disperse the crowd. More than 20 people were injured in the incident. Israeli authorities temporarily suspended Jewish visits to the Al-Aqsa compound in an attempt to de-escalate the situation.

On 22.04.22, a total of 31 Palestinians (among them three media workers) and one Israeli soldier were injured when the Israeli military stormed the entire compound again after Palestinians had hurled stones at a military base at the edge of the compound.

The unrest in East Jerusalem is causing international observers to worry about a new spiral of violence. Already in 2021, riots in East Jerusalem had triggered a similar conflict escalation situation, leading to a war between Hamas and Israel with numerous deaths (cf. BN of 17.05.21).

Israel: Palestinian attacker killed

On 12.04.22, a Palestinian from the West Bank attacked an Israeli policeman with a knife in the Israeli city of Ashkelon. The police officer was slightly injured and killed the attacker.

Gaza Strip / Israel: Rocket fire and closure of crossing to Gaza workers

For the first time in more than four months, Israel used its missile defence system on 18.04.22 to intercept a rocket from Gaza. Subsequently, on 19.04.22, Israeli fighter jets conducted airstrikes on an alleged Hamas weapons production facility. No one was wounded.

On 21.04.22, several rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel. According to the military, Israel carried out several airstrikes on Hamas bases.

On 22.04.22, two rockets were fired from Gaza in response to the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound by the Israeli military. One rocket hit the ground inside Gaza and wounded two residents, Palestinian media reported. None of these rockets fired resulted in personal or material damage in Israel, neither did a rocket fired from Gaza on 23.04.22.

Nevertheless, the Israeli authorities announced on 23.04.22 that they would temporarily close the Israeli-controlled Erez crossing from Gaza to Israel until the security situation has improved. In recent months, the Israeli government had issued thousands of work permits to Gaza residents as a "sign of goodwill". With the border closed, they can no longer reach their places of work.

Lebanon / Israel: Rocket fire from / on southern Lebanon

In the early morning of 25.04.22, a rocket launched from Lebanon fell on northern Israeli territory, but did not cause any damage. In response, Israel fired at targets in Lebanon from which the rockets were allegedly launched. As yet, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Somalia

Attack on a restaurant in Mogadishu

On 22.04.22, a suicide attack at a restaurant on Lido Beach in Mogadishu killed at least seven people, among them two police officers and civilians, and wounded at least ten others. Police chief General Abdi Mohamed Hijar and members of parliament were also in the restaurant at the time; apparently, they were not among the victims.

Arrest of 17 media workers in Somaliland

On 13.04.22, a total of 17 media workers were arrested while they were covering a prison riot in Hargeisa (Somaliland); three of them were released the same day. The police also confiscated several cameras. Reporters Without Borders, the National Union of Somali Journalists NUSOJ and other organisations are demanding their unconditional release. According to NUSOJ, this has been the largest wave of arrests of media workers in years across Somalia. The country is ranked 161 out of 180 in the World Press Freedom Index 2021.

Attack on meeting of members of the federal parliament

On 19.04.22, the newly elected lawmakers of Somalia's parliament were meeting for the second time when al-Shabaab fired mortar shells near their meeting venue in the Halane military camp in Mogadishu. Several people were injured in the incident. After a lengthy electoral process that was postponed several times, the parliamentary elections are nearing completion. The upper house elections have already been concluded, while elections for the lower house are still pending in Jubaland and Hirshabelle states due to a political deadlock. The presidential elections are to follow in the next few months.

Expulsion of ATMIS head after diplomatic row

The head of the African Union Transitional Mission ATMIS Francisco Madeira, who has been in office since 2015 and headed the previous African Union mission AMISOM until the end of March 2022, has been ordered to leave Somalia. The country stripped him of his diplomatic privileges and revoked his visa for alleged interference in Somalia's internal affairs. He is accused of corruption, mobbing and intimidation of his staff, among other things. It is still unclear who will take over his post.

South Sudan

Formation of a joint army and election plans for February 2023

After President Salva Kiir and Vice-President Riek Machar were able to agree on 31.03.22 on a consistent approach to the formation of joint armed forces (cf. BN of 04.04.22), representatives of the SPLM-IO criticised the implementation some weeks later, saying that the president was violating the agreements by, for example, creating posts for his own people that had not been agreed upon beforehand. In addition, they complained that Kiir had eliminated three posts originally intended for representatives of the SPLM-IO.

The formation of joint armed forces is a fundamental element of the 2018 peace agreement, as well as one of the preconditions for elections of a new government at the end of the transitional period. In a recent report, however, the UN mission in South Sudan doubts the feasibility of holding elections in February 2023, stating that the main obstacles were insufficient logistical preparation and the persistent insecurity in parts of the country.

Sri Lanka

Ongoing protests, one death by police shooting, cabinet reshuffle

Mass protests continue in the country. During a protest rally against rising petrol prices staged on 19.04.22, a man was shot dead by police and at least twelve other people were injured in the town of Rambukkana (Sabaragamuwa province). For about three weeks, a large number of people have been camping near the president's office in Colombo, demanding his resignation. On 12.04.22 the government stated that it would not be able to pay the next instalment on the foreign debt of over 50 billion US dollars; on 18.04.22 talks began with the International Monetary Fund IMF, the World Bank and others to discuss emergency economic measures. Also on 18.04.22, the president reshuffled the cabinet. Apart from the Prime Minister and brother of the President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, the new 17-member cabinet no longer includes any family member. On 19.04.22, the Prime Minister reportedly announced a constitutional amendment to limit the presidential powers and strengthen the rights of parliament.

Sudan

Military coup of 2021: releases and detentions of protesters and opposition members

On 22.04.22, the security authorities released 25 detained persons who had been arrested and imprisoned for participating in protests against the military coup. However, Sudanese lawyers have stated that a number of high-ranking members of the previous transitional government are still held in detention, as well as numerous other people who had taken part in the protests against the military coup. In addition, a leader of the opposition National Umma Party was arrested on 21.04.22 and taken to an unknown location.

Sexual violence against protesters

On 28.03.22, the UN Special Representative for Sudan Volker Perthes had presented to the UN Security Council 16 cases of sexual violence against women demonstrators committed by Sudanese security forces in December 2021, adding that he was working with the competent unit in the Sudanese ministry of social affairs. Subsequently, Sulima Ishaq, the head of this unit, was questioned by security services. According to her lawyers, she is now under investigation for leaking state secrets and defaming the security forces. She fears further harassment and accusations because of her work, and in the worst-case scenario, arrest and detention as a result of the ongoing investigation. This case is sensitive because victims of sexual violence traditionally face public harassment and police punishment if they make their experiences public. However, since Sulima Ishaq is addressing several cases

of rape in her capacity as a civil servant of the current government, the issue is developing a much greater significance, according to a Sudanese think tank.

Ongoing violence in the Darfur regions

On 24.04.22, at least 168 people were killed and 98 injured in fighting in the western Darfur region of Kreinik. The violence was triggered by the killing of two people by unidentified assailants near the provincial capital Genena on 21.04.22. This was followed by fighting between Arab and non-Arab groups which continued until 24.04.22. In the course of the fighting, there was looting, attacks on hospitals and arson attacks on houses. The International Committee of the Red Cross has blamed the Janjaweed group for the violence. On 23.04.22, the government sent in military forces, including air support, to bring the situation under control.

Sudan / South Sudan

Abyei Region: Insecure situation

In a report of 21.04.22 to the UN Security Council, Sudan and South Sudan were urged to renew talks on the final status of the Abyei region. According to the report, the situation is relatively calm overall, but marked by increasing mistrust between the two ethnic groups of Misseriya and Ngok Dinka.

In addition, several violent clashes in several towns in the region have killed up to 42 people and injured 27, the report notes. The numbers differ among the various sources. Also, almost 2,000 head of cattle have been stolen. According to the report, the humanitarian situation is also deteriorating. While in October 2021, a total of 103,000 people had been in need of assistance, the current figure is 240,000. In view of the prevailing problems, the report advocated for a six-month extension of the UNISFA mission beyond 15.10.22.

Togo

Prison visits possible again

On 19.04.22, Togo's justice minister Pius Kokouvi Agbétomey announced that starting on 22.04.22, detainees will be allowed to receive visits from relatives, friends and civil society organisations. The reopening comes after two years of closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the plans to protect detainees from infections. Previously, only legal advisers had access to detention facilities after obtaining permission. Now, visits will be authorised under the conditions of the presentation of a vaccination certificate or a PCR Test dating back less than 72 hours. In the underfunded prison system, visitors bringing food, clothing and medicines provide important support for inmates.

Tunisia

Election commission stripped of power – judicial independence remains fragile

On 22.04.22, President Saied announced the replacement of most members of the election commission ISIE and issued a decree to this effect stating that three of the existing nine members of the commission would be selected to stay on, serving in a new seven-member panel with an additional three judges and one information technology specialist. The judges would be selected by the supreme judicial council which Saied had replaced some weeks ago (cf. BN of 07.02.22). In addition, Saied himself would select the head of the commission, the decree stated. The current president of the electoral commission has commented that the panel is no longer independent, but has instead become the president's commission.

Turkey

Former prosecutor arrested

The former chief public prosecutor of Konya, Neyzen Özcan, was arrested on 24.04.22. He had been the subject of an arrest warrant for alleged FETÖ membership. Media report that he had been hiding for about six years and was

wanted in connection with the Gülen movement for attempting to abolish the constitutional order and being a member of an armed terrorist organisation.

Journalist arrested after data leak

On 19.04.22, journalist Ibrahim Haskologlu was detained after he reported on social media that hackers had stolen personal information from government websites and shared some of it with him.

He illustrated his contribution with alleged photos of President Erdogan's identity card and that of Hakan Fidan, the head of Turkey's secret service. According to his lawyer, Haskologlu was arrested for illegally obtaining and disseminating personal information as a result of his post.

Bomb attack in Bursa

On 20.04.22, a remote-controlled homemade explosive device detonated in Bursa province when a bus carrying about 30 people, mainly prison guards, drove past it. One prison guard was killed, and several other people were injured in the attack. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Ukraine / Russian Federation

War and humanitarian situation

The war is intensifying in the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine, with military advances by Russian ground forces and ongoing missile attacks, especially on the city of Kharkiv and in the contested areas of Donetsk and Luhansk (cf. BN of 11.04.22). Air strikes with several civilian casualties were also reported from the port city of Odessa on 23.04.22. With regard to the southern Ukrainian region of Kherson, which has been largely captured by Russian forces, the Ukrainian military reported on 24.04.22 to have regained control over several villages and also that Russian troops were being massed for a possible imminent attack on the city of Kryvyi Rih. Media report that the city of Mariupol has been taken by Russian forces, with the exception of the "Azovstal" steel plant. In view of the situation in the city, Ukraine asked the Russian Federation on 24.04.22 to negotiate an exchange of military personnel and civilians and the establishment of a humanitarian corridor. Previously, the Russian side had demanded the surrender of the remaining Ukrainian forces on the site of the steel plant as the precondition for a ceasefire in Mariupol. Ukrainian sources say that about 1,000 civilians are still on the site of the plant, and more than 100,000 people who have not yet been evacuated are still in the city. The Russian military announced on 22.04.22 that it was seeking complete control over the eastern Donbass region as well as southern Ukraine. The Donetsk regional administration stated on 22.04.22 that three quarters of the residents in the Ukrainian-controlled part of the Donetsk region had meanwhile left the area. President Zelenskyy stated that the Russian Federation had rejected a ceasefire demanded by Ukraine on the occasion of the Orthodox Christian Easter. A Human Rights Watch HRW report published on 21.04.22 says that evidence of executions, disappearances and torture committed by Russian forces were found in the town of Bucha near Kyiv. An OHCHR press release dated 22.04.22 says that the unlawful killing of 50 civilians was documented in Bucha. In total, the UN has registered up to and including 21.04.22 at least 2,435 civilians killed and 2,946 civilians injured in connection with the war. According to Ukrainian data published on 22.04.22, a total of 1,084 bodies of killed civilians have been found in the Kyiv region so far. As of 23.02.22, UNHCR has recorded around 5.2 million people who have left Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian military invasion; the Ukrainian border service informs that around 1.15 million people entered Ukraine between 28.02. and 23.04.22. Current IOM estimates put the number of internally displaced people in the first 17 days of April at 600,000, and the total number of people who have fled within Ukraine as a result of the war at around 7.7 million. Following an initiative by President Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian parliament voted on 21.04.22 in favour of extending the current martial law until 25.05.22. A general ban on leaving the country continues to apply to male Ukrainian citizens between 18 and 60 years of age.

Venezuela

Arrest after satirical TikTok video

Media report that on 18.04.22, Olga Mata de Gil, aged 72, was arrested by the police on charges of "inciting hatred" after she had made fun of various politicians in a video posted on the portal TikTok. In the video, she can be seen

in a comedic role naming different fillings of typical national corn cakes (arepas) after politicians. She dedicates a so-called "widow" arepa, (a plain cake without filling), to Cilia Flores, wife of President Nicolás Maduro. To the comment of the women filming her that Flores is not a widow after all, she replies: "Well, but that's what we all wish for." Her son was also detained for "inciting the assassination of public figures", although his role in the making of the video is unclear. Olga Mata de Gil citizen has since been released from custody, but she is obliged to report to the authorities every 30 days. The charges against her son have been dropped.

Vietnam

Convictions for supporting an exile organisation classified as terrorist

On 18.04.22, a court in Ho Chi Minh City sentenced twelve people to prison terms between three and 13 years for supporting the exile organisation Provisional National Government of Vietnam. The government had classified the group as a terrorist organisation in 2018 for planning coup attempts. Reportedly, nine of the convicts are from different provinces of the country, and all twelve were convicted in one trial despite having no links to each other.

Yemen

Status of ceasefire agreement

The ceasefire that came into effect on 02.04.22 (cf. BN of 04.04.22) has enabled the expansion of humanitarian aid programmes. Nevertheless, fighting continues, especially in the area around the contested town of Marib in the governorate of the same name.

As part of the ceasefire, it had been agreed in advance to exchange prisoners and to operate two commercial flights a week to and from Sanaa airport to Egypt and Jordan. Neither of the agreements have been implemented yet, the latter due to disagreement over the use of passports issued by the Houthi authorities.

Houthis commit to end recruitment of child soldiers

On 18.04.22, Houthi representatives signed a UN action plan banning recruitment and use of child soldiers. In recent years, the Houthis have recruited thousands of minors, who are to be released within the next six months.