



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

2 May 2022

Afghanistan

Security situation: wave of attacks in the month of Ramadan

The fasting month of Ramadan ended on 01.05.22. One day before, a bus was attacked in western Kabul, leaving three women killed and two other people injured. The Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) has claimed responsibility for the attack. On 29.04.22, a bomb attack on a Sufi Sunni mosque in Kabul killed at least 50 people and injured about 70. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack. On 28.04.22, two bomb blasts on minivans killed nine people and injured 13 others in the city of Mazar-e Sharif. The victims are mainly members of the Shiite Hazara community; the ISKP has claimed responsibility for the attack. On 26.04.22, unidentified gunmen shot dead five Hazara passengers on the Samangan highway in Dara-e Suf Bala district of Balkh province.

Security situation: Spring offensive of the resistance continues

The resistance group National Liberation Front (NLF) has claimed responsibility for attacking a checkpoint in Kabul on 30.04.22, killing seven Taliban and capturing their weapons. On 23.04.22 Qari Nusratullah, a Taliban commander accused of numerous attacks against civilians in Kapisa, Parwan and Panjshir provinces and a member of the Badri unit, was killed by the NLF in Kapisa province. On the same day, the NLF killed another Taliban commander and five of his bodyguards in Istalif district, Kabul province. In Baghlan province, clashes between the Taliban and the National Resistance Front (NRF) left 11 Taliban and some NRF fighters dead.

Persecution situation: Detentions

On 27.04.22, two civil rights activists and a journalist were arrested in Herat city for posting comments against the Taliban on their Facebook pages. On the same day, the Taliban arrested six National Resistance Front (NRF) supporters in Ghor province. Also on 27.04.22, a former member of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) was arrested by the Taliban in Kabul.

Armenia

Protests against concessions to Azerbaijan

Thousands of people rallied on 01.05.22 against possible concessions by the government to Azerbaijan. Opposition supporters gathered in the centre of the capital Yerevan and demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. He is accused by the opposition of wanting to cede all of the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan. Recently, he had stated in parliament that the international community was appealing to Armenia "to scale down demands on Nagorno-Karabakh". At the protest rally, opposition leader Ishkhan Sagatelyan accused Pashinyan of treason and stressed that any political status of Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan was unacceptable.

Background

For decades, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been fighting over control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which under international law belongs to Azerbaijan but is predominantly populated by ethnic Armenians. In autumn 2020, fierce battles had been fought for six weeks, killing more than 6,500 people. The fighting ended with Armenia's defeat and a ceasefire agreement in favour of Azerbaijan, overseen by Russian troops.

Benin

Dead in attack

On 26.04.2022, a police officer was killed by unidentified individuals in an attack on a police station in Monsey (Alibori department) on the border with Niger.

Burkina Faso

Talks with extremist groups

With the support of the government, communities suffering under extremist violence are planning to hold talks with fighters of local armed groups. The creation of "local dialogue committees" was announced, composed of religious and traditional leaders who are to engage in talks with violent Burkinabe groups that have emerged in the country. Apparently, intelligence services have identified about ten such groups. Groups active across borders in neighbouring countries with links to IS and al-Qaida will be excluded from the talks. The aim of the negotiations is to persuade the fighters to lay down their weapons and to enable reintegration into the local community.

In the absence of military success by the government, communities affected by the violence are seeking a solution through talks with extremists. However, some of the extremists are also seeking to enter into dialogue. Experts assume that many of the fighters are young men without prospects or jobs, who were recruited with promises of lucrative income opportunities and more, and do not see their expectations fulfilled. Local dialogues have been held across the country since 2020, but without the support of the government, which does not intend to participate in the envisaged talks.

Colombia

Extradition of Otoniel to United States suspended

On 29.04.22, the supreme administrative court suspended the extradition of the Clan del Golfo chief alias Otoniel to the USA after a group of victims had filed a lawsuit. They argued that Otoniel should first testify before the special justice for peace in Colombia.

Demonstrations in memory of Paro Nacional

Interior minister Palacios has informed that during the demonstrations held on 28.04.22 in commemoration of the protests in the spring of 2021 (so-called Paro Nacional), in which numerous people had been killed, minor incidents occurred in the cities of Bogotá, Medellín, Tunja, Popayán and Pereira. According to police reports, 47 people were arrested and three police officers were injured.

Côte d'Ivoire

Violence and use of tear gas against protesting students

Media report that on 26.04.22, police used force and tear gas against striking students on the campus of Bouaké in the central region of Gbêkê. Before, the students allegedly harassed and attacked the police by throwing stones at them. Injuries were reported on both sides. While police said one student and two security guards were injured, the Secretary General of the Comité des élèves et étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire, Jacob Ouattara, mentioned at least 50 students injured. Police stated that 22 students were arrested and, contrary to widespread reports, no students'

premises were vandalised by the police. The students have been protesting since 25.04.22 for better study conditions and for examinations to be held closer to home.

DR Congo

Haut-Uélé Province: Ongoing tensions between Mbororo herders and local villagers

Interior and security minister Asele Okito has stated that tensions are continuing between the foreign, Islamic nomadic herders of the Mbororo ethnic group and the local villagers in the north-eastern province of Haut-Uélé. The minister said that the Mbororo, who are often using weapons, receive support from the Central African and Muslim-majority "Séléka", which is an alliance of various armed rebel groups present in this part of the country. Recently, Christian farmers and the Mbororo have violently clashed in the northern and north-eastern parts of the country, especially in the provinces of Lower and Haut-Uélé the past, the minister stated. Leaders in the northern parts of the country described the advance and presence of the Mbororo pastoralist communities as an "Islamic invasion", the minister added. However, observers say that the conflicts are not only based on religious issues, but also on different economic lifestyles and other factors.

Several deaths in Makala Central Prison (Kinshasa)

The NGO Association Africaine de Défense des Droits de l'Homme (ASADHO) stated on 28.04.22 that in March 2022 alone, 33 deaths were documented in Makala Central Prison in the capital Kinshasa. The main causes were a lack of medical care and the poor sanitary conditions in the prison, which was particularly affected by overcrowding (cf. BN of 11.04.22).

North Kivu: Co-leader of La Véranda Mutsanga group sentenced, protest in Oicha

According to UN information radio Okapi, Fiston Isambiro, one of the leaders of the civil society youth group La Véranda Mutsanga in Beni, was found guilty on all charges by a military court in Beni (North Kivu). In the verdict issued on 22.04.22, he was sentenced to ten years imprisonment for the military offences of "calling for disobedience of laws", threats, an assassination attempt and other offences. The prosecution had charged him, among other things, with disseminating leaflets on the internet containing calls for violence, which allegedly had led to the to premises of the town hall and a base of the UN stabilisation mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO) being set on fire on 25.11.19.

Okapi also reported that on 25.04.22, police and youths clashed in Oicha town (Beni territory) in the Masosi neighbourhood, with two police officers left wounded. 16 arrests were reported, and several youths were charged. The youths had responded to a call for a demonstration called "ville morte" (dead city) by the youth group Véranda Mutsanga. The group had repeated their demands to lift the state of siege which has been in force in North Kivu province since May 2021.

Egypt

Singers convicted for allegedly violating family values

A court in Alexandria has sentenced the two singers Omar Kamal and Hamo Beeka to one year in prison and a fine of EGP 10,000 (approx. EUR 512, as of 02.05.22) for violating the family values of Egyptian society with their video released in October 2020. The two singers are representatives of Mahraganat, a very popular music genre in Egypt that emerged around 2008 in the poorer neighbourhoods of the cities of Cairo and Alexandria. The lyrics of the mostly young artists deal with everyday and social problems as well as the precarious living conditions in their neighbourhoods. For several years, the state musicians' syndicate has been trying to stop the distribution of Mahraganat. In November 2021, the government body revoked the licences of 19 Mahraganat artists to perform in public because their allegedly immoral and dangerous song lyrics were considered a danger for society.

Two media workers arrested

Media have reported that between 25.04. and 01.05.22, two female employees of state television and radio stations were remanded in custody for 15 days. TV presenter Hala Fahmy and journalist Safaa al-Korbighi are accused of membership in an illegal group and spreading false news. On social media, the two women voiced criticism of the

dire economic situation in Egypt and participated in protest rallies against corruption and delayed salary payments in state media institutions.

More than 3,000 prisoners pardoned

On 27.04.22, the authorities announced that more than 3,000 prisoners would be released as part of a presidential pardon. Journalist Hossam Moniss, who had been sentenced to four years in prison for allegedly spreading false news in November 2021, is reportedly among those pardoned. Only shortly before, 41 people were released on the occasion of the celebrations for the end of the Muslim fasting month (cf. BN of 25.04.22).

El Salvador

State of emergency extended, about 20,000 people arrested in connection with gang violence

On 24.04.22, parliament extended the state of emergency, including numerous restrictions on constitutional guarantees, for another 30 days (cf. BN of 28.03.22 and 04.04.22). President Bukele has informed that 20,000 suspected pandilleros were arrested by 28.04.22. However, scientists and NGOs have voiced doubts that all those arrested are gang members.

Ethiopia

Several dead in religious violence

Reports say that on 26.04.22, an armed group killed over 20 mourners during the funeral of a Muslim cleric in the northern Ethiopian town of Gondar in Amhara Regional State. The cemetery is adjacent to both a mosque and a church and is disputed between Muslims and Orthodox Christians.

The following days saw the escalation of violence. Media report that more people were killed, nearly 120 injured and 370 arrested. Two mosques were looted and burnt down in the towns of Debark, 100 km north of Gondar, and two churches in Worabe in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). The government has put the blame for the attacks on radical groups who allegedly try to stir up animosity between the different religious communities with the aim of causing chaos across the country.

Gambia

Convictions for attempted human trafficking

The Gambian news portal Foroyaa reports that the Banjul magistrate court has sentenced two individuals each to the minimum penalty of a fine of GMD 50,000 (approx. EUR 875, as of 29.04.22) and 15 years imprisonment for attempted human trafficking under section 35(1) in conjunction with section 29(1) and (4) of the Trafficking in Persons Act 2007. In 2021, several cases of investigation and prosecution as well as some convictions for trafficking in persons became known (cf. BN of 08.11.21).

Guinea-Bissau

Situation of press freedom and security of media professionals

On 26.04.22, the German news portal Deutsche Welle (DW) reported about government measures to curtail press freedom and about attacks on media companies and media workers. In April 2022, the government had issued closure orders against 79 of the 88 licensed radio stations operating nationwide who had not been able to pay the licence fees required for the renewal of their licences within the 72-hour deadline, which, according to the Guinea-Bissau press union, amounts to EUR 400 per year. Many of the radio stations were already in financial difficulties and unable to pay the licence fees, the DW report said. The legal basis of the ad-hoc closure orders was questionable, the report continued. Those broadcasters that continue their work without a valid licence could face up to three years in prison. Nine radio stations, which had paid their licence fees, were not able to broadcast due to

the lack of clearance by the communications ministry. The radio is the most important source of news and information for the people of Guinea-Bissau.

Media representatives fear, among other things, a suppression of critical voices by the government and the end of media independence. Augusto Mario da Silva, president of the Liga Guineense dos Direitos Humanos (Guinean League for Human Rights), has accused the government of making the final push to eliminate the democratic rule of law and establish a dictatorial regime bent on confiscating all the fundamental rights and freedoms. Citing the NGO Reporters Without Borders, DW said that the political gridlock in the country has weakened both media and journalists, leaving them vulnerable to political pressure and also opening the door to increasing government interference in state media. Media professionals use self-censorship and try to escape attacks, intimidation and threats by fleeing abroad, DW reported. There have been attacks on media houses critical of the government, for example at the beginning of February 2022 when armed supporters of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló occupied the headquarters of the state radio and television station Capital FM following an alleged coup attempt (cf. BN of 14.04.22), or a few months later when unidentified gunmen attacked another radio station. Media workers critical of the government were also attacked, for example Rui Landim, an analyst for Capital FM radio station, in February 2022 (cf. BN of 14.04.22). According to DW, Landim believes that he is the victim of a targeted attack by the Embaló government, which however has condemned the attack and promised to launch an investigation into the incident.

India

Karnataka: Christian schools investigated on suspicion of proselytising

The Karnataka state government is investigating alleged cases of religious conversion in Christian schools. The Archbishop of Bengaluru has rejected the suspicion of proselytising, stating that non-Christian students were not required to read the Bible at schools run by the Christian community in Karnataka.

Iran

Arrests in the context of 1 May rallies

Foreign media report that on 01.05.22 protesters, among them trade union members and teachers, were summoned, threatened, and arrested in the course of nationwide protest rallies. Already ahead of the protests, police reportedly searched their homes and confiscated their belongings. In the south-western city of Bushehr, security forces cracked down on a rally and arrested six people. In recent months, both active and retired teachers have regularly staged demonstrations for wage adjustment, improvement of working conditions and the release of imprisoned union members, with security forces resorting to violence and arrests (cf. BN of 25.04.22).

Environmental protests crushed

According to media reports of 28.04.22, security forces crushed a series of protests against growing waste landfills near the town of Saravan (Gilan province). Apparently, the protesters had blocked the access of garbage trucks to the neighbouring forests by staging sit-ins. In the ensuing clashes, at least 22 people were arrested by security forces using tear gas and violence. Apparently, the background to the protests is the increasing pollution of the region due to decades of waste dumping, with about 16 hectares of forest affected. Citizens of Saravan have increasingly complained about odour nuisance, infectious diseases, and contamination of the groundwater.

Imprisoned award-winning students sentenced to 16 years each

According to media reports of 25.04.22, two students from Tehran's Sharif University of Technology who have been held in detention since April 2020 were sentenced to prison terms of 16 years each. The students of physics and computer sciences have been winners of academic olympiads. They were charged with spreading corruption on earth as well as assembly, collusion, and propaganda against the regime. Among other things, they were accused of having links to the opposition People's Mujahedin MEK, which is considered a terrorist organisation in the country. Their lawyer stated that both had made confessions after fifty days of incommunicado detention in Tehran's Evin prison without access to legal counsel, presumably under duress. Their lawyer has announced to appeal against the verdict. Already in 2021, human rights organisations as well as an association of 170 university employees had demanded the release of the two students in a statement to Chief Justice Ejei.

Death penalty: Report on significant increase in executions in 2021

According to the annual report published on 28.04.22 by the human rights organisations Iran Human Rights IHRNGO and Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort ECPM, at least 333 people were executed in 2021. This represents an increase of 25 percent compared to the previous year. Also, 17 women were executed in 2021, compared to nine in 2020. A total of 21 percent of the executed prisoners were ethnic Balochis. With a total of 126, the number of executions for drug-related offences has increased fivefold compared to 2020. According to the report, 55 percent of the executions were related to murder offences.

Iraq

Operations against the IS

On 25.02.22, units of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) destroyed a total of seven IS hideouts in Anbar province by. Further hideouts were destroyed in Salah-ad-Din.

On 26.02.22, an IS suicide bomber killed two Iraqi soldiers north of Baghdad. Another IS insurgent was killed before he could set off his bomb.

Turkish attacks on the PKK in northern Iraq

On 26.02.22, a PKK rocket attack against a Turkish unit north of Dohuk killed three Turkish soldiers.

On 01.05.22, the Turkish defence ministry confirmed the death of two more soldiers in connection with the ongoing military operation against the PKK. This brings to 13 the number of soldiers killed in action and confirmed by the Turkish government. The PKK, for its part, has stated to have lost 11 fighters so far.

Rocket attacks

On 01.05.22, a refinery in Erbil was attacked again with a total of six Katyusha rockets from Nineveh province. No group has claimed responsibility so far; however, the region is controlled by a militia with links to Iran. The Iranian side has frequently claimed that there is a secret Israeli base in the area.

On 30.04.22, a military base used by US troops in Anbar province (Ain al-Assad) was attacked with a Katyusha missile; however, the missile hit the ground several kilometres away from the presumed target.

Lebanon

Impacts of the crisis

On 29.04.22, the General Security Agency announced that it would not accept any further applications for passport renewal for the time being, as the demand was simply too huge. Since the beginning of the extensive economic and monetary crisis, the demand for passports has increased more than tenfold. The rising number of applications and the dwindling stock have forced the authorities to halt passport renewals.

On 30.04.22, Iran offered to resupply Lebanon with crude oil and wheat.

Border incident in Wadi Khaled

On 27.04.22, a firefight broke out in the border area of Wadi Khaled after an IS-affiliated fugitive was shot dead by local Lebanese forces. No other casualties were reported.

Libya

At least 130 people killed by abandoned ordnance since June 2020

In a recent report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) states that at least 130 people, most of them civilians, have been killed and 200 others injured by explosive remnants of war in Tripoli since June 2020.

Background

In a military offensive on Tripoli, General Khalifa Haftar and units of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) began fighting against the former Government of National Unity (GNA) in April 2019. In June 2020, LAAF-allied units withdrew from western Libya, leaving mines and booby traps in the southern suburbs of the capital.

Montenegro

Dritan Abazovic elected new prime minister of a minority government

Media report that on 28.04.22, parliament elected Dritan Abazovic, the party leader of the Black-on-White Bloc, as Montenegro's new prime minister with 45 votes (out of 81). He replaces Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic, who was ousted in a vote of no confidence in February 2022 (cf. BN of 07.02.22). Abazovic is heading a minority government with a one-year mandate, which is tasked to prepare for the early parliamentary elections announced for spring 2023. The new government coalition is composed of representatives of the Black-on-White Bloc, the pro-Serbian Socialist People's Party (SNP), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Bosniak Party and two ethnic-Albanian coalitions. Also the opposition Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) supported the coalition in the voting; however, the DPS remains outside the government. In contrast, the two alliances For the Future of Montenegro and Peace is Our Nation, who had dominated the previous government under Krivokapic, had boycotted the voting, accusing the coalition of betraying the election results of August 2020 (with the DPS being voted out at the time). Apparently, Abazovic has announced that he would reduce the country's social polarisation and accelerate both the reform process and the EU integration.

Morocco

Activist sentenced to four years in prison

The court of first instance in Al Hoceima has sentenced the activist Rabie Al Ablaq to four years' imprisonment and a fine of the equivalent of EUR 1,900 for insulting King Mohammed VI on social media. Human Rights Watch has described the conviction as an act against freedom of expression. Al Ablaq had posted two videos (in September 2021 on Facebook and in November 2021 on You Tube), in which he addresses the king, in a confidential tone, about the contrasts between his wealth and the poverty of many people in Morocco.

Nicaragua

Withdrawal from OAS, closure and nationalisation of its Managua office, Parrales trial

On 24.04.22, President Ortega announced Nicaragua's final withdrawal from the Organisation of American States (OAS). On the same day, the accreditations of numerous representatives at the OAS headquarters in Washington were withdrawn. Already in November 2021, Ortega had announced his withdrawal following strong criticism of the electoral process and his re-election. On 26.04.22, the attorney general's office published a decree declaring the property of the organisation's office in Managua to be of public utility and regulating its transfer to state ownership. OAS secretary general Almagro has rejected the withdrawal, saying that this was not in line with the statutes, as a withdrawal normally takes two years. Also, Almagro criticised the closure of the office. Already at the end of March 2022, the Nicaraguan ambassador to the OAS Arturo McFields had been dismissed after publicly calling President Ortega a dictator and strongly criticising him. On 26.04.22, former Nicaraguan representative to the OAS and presently political prisoner Edgar Parrales Castillo was found guilty of conspiracy to undermine national integrity and spreading false news, as has been reported by the NGO Centro Nicaraguense de Derechos Humanos on Venezuela (CENIDH). The prosecution demands a prison sentence of eight years, the verdict is expected on 05.05.22.

Imprisoned opposition leaders found guilty, 25 more NGOs deprived of legal status

On 30.04.22, Michael Healy and Álvaro Vargas, former president and vice-president of the Supreme Council of Private Enterprises (COSEP), were found guilty of undermining national integrity and/or conspiracy, as has been reported by CENIDH. The prosecution has requested a prison term of 13 years for Healy and 9 years for Vargas.

Already on 20.04.22, the Sandinista-dominated national assembly had withdrawn the legal status of 25 more civil society organisations. This brings to 168 the number of organisations deprived of their status since the 2018 protests, according to media reports.

Nigeria

Insecure situation in Kaduna State: deadly attacks and kidnappings

In large parts of northern Kaduna state, the security situation continues to cause concern, despite a strong security force presence. About a month after heavily armed assailants had attacked a passenger train carrying hundreds of passengers on 28.03.22 (cf. BN of 04.04.22 and 11.04.22), which reportedly left at least nine people dead and numerous injured and abducted, photos circulated on social media on 26.04.22 showing a total of 62 people kidnapped in the attack. Observers suspect that their kidnapping is not for ransom but to force the release of imprisoned criminals.

Other attacks have targeted local leaders. On 10.04.22, unidentified gunmen killed a community leader near the state capital, just one day after his inauguration. On 28.04.22 a traditional ruler was reportedly abducted with three of his children and several other people from his farm in central Kaduna. In exchange for his release, the kidnappers allegedly demanded, among other things, food, fuel, recharge cards, cigarettes, and the painkiller Tramadol, which is often abused as a drug in West Africa. According to a count by a Nigeria-based geopolitical consultancy, a total of 1,192 people were killed and 3,348 abducted by so-called bandits in Kaduna in 2021.

Senate passes bill to sanction ransom payers

Media report that the Nigerian senate has passed a law that prescribes a prison sentence of at least 15 years for people who pay ransoms to kidnappers. Critics complain that this criminalises people who are trying to save the lives of kidnapped relatives. The law stipulates capital punishment or life imprisonment for kidnappers. The law needs to be debated and passed by the House of Representatives of Nigeria, the lower house of the bicameral parliament, before it can be brought into force by the president.

Separatist leader demands public trial

Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the Nigerian independence movement Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), is contesting what believes is an illegal court decision. According to media reports of late April 2022, he has applied to the country's federal high court to overturn a decision of 08.04.22 prescribing that all terrorism cases must be heard in secret for security reasons. The contested decision restricts media coverage, as access to the court premises is only allowed to court staff and security personnel. Kanu is on trial in connection with IPOB activities on charges of terrorism, among other offences (cf. BN of 25.10.21). He denies any wrongdoing.

Pakistan

Suicide attack on Chinese nationals in Karachi

On 26.04.22, three Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver were killed in a suicide attack outside a Chinese cultural centre belonging to the University of Karachi. The separatist Balochistan Liberation Army BLA has claimed responsibility for the attack. The attack was presumably committed by a female perpetrator, the first woman to carry out a suicide bombing for the BLA. Media report that she is a 30-year-old educated middle class woman, married with two children.

On 27.04.22, the BLA spokesperson stated that hundreds of well-trained male and female members of the Majeed Brigade were ready to continue carrying out deadly attacks, especially on Chinese targets in Pakistan.

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Gaza: border crossing to Israel reopened

Media report that after three days of closure, the Israeli authorities opened the Erez crossing between Gaza and Israel on 26.04.22. According to the Israeli military, the closure was a reaction to rockets launched from Gaza (cf.

BN of 25.04.22). A radio station operated by the Israeli military has estimated the direct loss of income for Gaza, which is economically distressed, at more than ILS 5 million (approx. EUR 1.4 million, as of 02.05.22) for each day of the closure.

West Bank / East Jerusalem: Several dead and wounded in new escalation of violence

The Palestinian health ministry has informed that on 26.04.22, a Palestinian was killed by the Israeli military in clashes with residents of the Aqbat Jabr refugee camp near Jericho in the east of the West Bank.

On 27.04.22, another Palestinian was killed in Jenin, in the north of the West Bank, during a military raid and subsequent clashes.

More than 40 Palestinians were wounded in a new escalation of violence at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem on 29.04.22. The violence subsided when uninvolved Palestinians convinced both the Israeli military and violent Palestinians to retreat from the scene.

Also on 29.04.22, Palestinian assailants killed a security guard at the entrance to the Jewish settlement of Ariel in the West Bank. After a large-scale manhunt inside the West Bank, two suspects were arrested on 30.04.22.

In the early morning of 30.04.22, the Israeli military shot dead a Palestinian during clashes near Qalqilya, in the west of the West Bank.

Republic of Moldova

Tensions in the Transnistrian region

A series of attacks and explosions between 25.02 and 28.02.22 related to several state infrastructure objects have led to a deterioration of the security situation in the separatist Moldovan region of Transnistria. Social media report queues of motor vehicles at crossing points to Moldovan-controlled territory. Apparently, large stocks of ammunition are stored in Transnistria, and an estimated 1,500-2,000 Russian armed forces personnel are stationed in the area. Western states in particular are concerned about a possible spillover of the war in neighbouring Ukraine to the territory of the Republic of Moldova or Transnistria if the security situation were to deteriorate further. As of 29.04.22, the Republic of Moldova has recorded around 443,559 border crossings from Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian military invasion on 24.02.22.

Somalia

Assault

On 25.04.22, military official General Mohamed Hashi Guled, was hit by a landmine while leaving the Villa Baidoa army base. He was injured in the blast and taken to hospital. Local authorities have informed that three people were killed in the attack, i.e. one of the officer's bodyguards, his driver and a civilian. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

South Sudan

Security situation in Upper Nile State

In its report of 25.04.22, the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) condemned the crimes committed during the outbreak of violence between 17.02.22 and 07.04.22 in the Leer region. According to the report, there was widespread use of sexual violence as well as beheadings and the burning alive of civilians. The violence was perpetrated by armed youths from the Koch and Mayendit regions, who also attacked several villages, stole the livestock of the local population, burned down houses and looted stocks. Due to the violence, almost 40,000 people fled the region, some of them across the Nile to neighbouring Jonglei State. According to further information from the UN, about 72 people were killed and 11 injured during the period. In addition, 64 cases of sexual violence were registered.

The head of UNMISS subsequently called on national and regional authorities to take immediate action to reduce the prevailing tensions and prevent further escalation of violence and retaliation. The perpetrators would have to be held accountable by the judiciary, UNMISS demanded.

Sudan

Ongoing demonstrations

On 30.04.22, there were new demonstrations against the military coup. In Khartoum, protesters blocked an important road junction and prepared food on site for the breaking of the fast in the evening of that day. Before sunset, security forces used tear gas against the demonstration and broke up the gathering. Also, demonstrations were reported in the towns of Madani, Kosti and El Obeid, with protesters commemorating the victims of the rallies that had led to the overthrow of former President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019.

Arbitrary arrests

The former minister of cabinet affairs Khalid Omar, as well as the former member of the Sovereign Council Mohammed al-Faki Suliman, were reportedly released from detention on 27.04.22.

Both had first been detained in the wake of the military coup in October 2021, but were released as part of an agreement between the military leadership and the reinstated Prime Minister Hamdok. A month after Hamdok resigned in January 2022, they were arrested and detained again during the ongoing protests. According to their lawyers, their current release is an attempt by the military leadership to regain trust and find a way out of the political impasse in which the country is stuck.

Despite the release of prisoners, the military government continues to crack down on demonstrators and opposition members. Resistance committees have reported that six detained members were transferred to El Hoda prison without evidence against them. The defendants were also denied a meeting with their lawyers.

In a statement of 28.04.22, Human Rights Watch (HRW) denounced the practices of the security forces, including unlawful arrests, disappearances, ill-treatment of detainees, targeted use of violence and the use of sexual violence. HRW called on the authorities to immediately stop this practice and to release all people unjustly detained. Also, HRW urged that the state of emergency be revoked that had been declared on 26.12.21 and has since been in place.

Ongoing violence in the Darfur regions

Fighting in and around the town of Kreinik continued until 26.04.22 and spread to the regional capital Geneina (cf. BN of 25.04.22). Apparently, the ongoing fighting has triggered the flight of tens of thousands of people and probably claimed more than 200 lives. The exact circumstances regarding the involvement of the Janjaweed group, which was largely absorbed into the Rapid Support Forces RSF remain unclear. Government security forces reportedly did not intervene in the fighting because, on the one hand, members of the RSF (some of them former Janjaweed) participated in the attacks on Kreinik and, on the other hand, police forces had left their posts before the attacks to avoid a fight.

Most reports agree that the cause of the fighting was a dispute between a nomadic ethnic group and local farmers, belonging to the Massalit ethnic group, over water and pastureland. Apparently, two nomads of Arab origin had been killed in the dispute, which led to retaliation that eventually escalated into widespread fighting.

Doctors without Borders has reported attacks and looting at a hospital in Kreinik and at another one in El Geneina. In both attacks, staff members of the organisation as well as other medical personnel were killed and injured. Due to the insecure situation, the organisation has suspended all activities in the region for the time being and is awaiting further developments.

Until 27.04.22, almost all shops, government offices, medical facilities and marketplaces remained closed in the regions around Kreinik and El Geneina. In addition, a camp for internally displaced people near the town of El Geneina, abandoned due to the fighting, was looted by local residents without regional security forces intervening. Since 28.04.22, there have been isolated reports of new violence in the region. The exact situation remains unclear. For the Darfur Lawyers Association, the military coup of October 2021 was a driving factor for the increased activities of groups of Arab origin. According to the organisation, Arab militias have long been allied with General Hemeti, leader of the RSF and second man after General al-Burhan. Apparently, they now see an opportunity to expand their sphere of influence and conquer land.

Syria

Deir ez-Zor: Seven people killed in attack

Media report that on 28.04.22, armed gunmen on motorbikes came to the house of a former spokesman of the Syrian Democratic Forces SDF and opened fire on the group inside, who had gathered for breaking the fast. IS later claimed responsibility for the attack, which took place near the village of Abu Khashab in the north of Deir ez-Zor governorate. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has documented seven dead and four injured.

New defence minister appointed

In a press release of 28.04.22, the state news agency SANA informed that President Assad had appointed Major General Ali Mahmoud Abbas as the new defence minister and deputy supreme commander of the armed forces. Abbas comes from a majority Sunni region of Syria and succeeds Lieutenant General Ali Abdullah Ayyoub, an Alawite who had held the post since 2018.

At least four soldiers killed in Israeli air strike

The Syrian defence ministry confirmed on 27.04.22 that four members of the armed forces were killed by an Israeli missile attack near the capital Damascus on the same day. The opposition group Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has reported that the attack targeted an ammunition depot and that at least five different positions were hit. According to the report, five members of the regular army and four other fighters from abroad were killed. The Israeli military has not commented on the events.

Turkey

Verdict in Kavala trial

On 25.04.22 Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala, who has been held in prison for over four years without a verdict, was sentenced to life imprisonment by a court in Istanbul. He was found guilty of attempting to overthrow the government in connection with the Gezi protests in 2013. Seven other defendants, among them the architect Mücella Yapici and the lawyer Can Atalay, were sentenced to 18 years for aiding and abetting. The verdict is not yet final. The decision was met with international outcry. Already in December 2019, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) had ordered Kavala's release, but the Turkish government ignored the ruling, whereupon the Council of Europe initiated an infringement procedure against Turkey in February 2022 (cf. BN of 07.02.22). Both the Turkish foreign ministry and President Erdoğan rejected international criticism of Kavala's conviction.

Following Kavala's conviction, hundreds of people demonstrated for democracy and the rule of law in peaceful rallies in several Turkish cities on 26.04.22.

Deportation of refugees to Afghanistan

On 01.05.22, Turkish authorities informed that between 22.04 and 25.04.22, a total of 227 Afghan refugees who had been detained in a deportation camp were returned to Afghanistan by charter flight. According to government figures, at least 6,805 Afghan refugees have been deported to Afghanistan since the resumption of charter flights from Malatya airport in January 2022. Among the returnees are former Afghan national security forces personnel who fear persecution by the Taliban government. Media reports say that some of the deported refugees, among them families with children, have no financial means to return to their homes after arriving in Kabul.

Arrests in connection with the Gülen movement

On 26.04.22 Turkish security forces arrested 26 people in several operations against the Gülen movement. The prosecutor general's office in Istanbul has issued arrest warrants for 53 suspects accused of being part of a suspected "secret" Gülen network in the Turkish armed forces. Some 23 suspects have reportedly been arrested in operations in 16 provinces, while the remaining people are being sought. Among the suspects sought and arrested are three sergeants from the land forces command as well as sergeants expelled from the air forces command on suspicion of links to the Gülen movement, and also former military cadets.

Ukraine / Russian Federation

War and humanitarian situation in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine caused by the Russian invasion is continuing, especially in the southern and eastern regions (cf. BN of 25.04.22). Media reports of 28.04. and 29.04.22 say that Russian forces launched military attacks in and around the cities of Kharkiv, Izyum, Mykolaiv, Lysychansk and Severodonetsk; in addition, missile attacks are continuing on targets in western and central Ukraine, including the capital Kyiv. On 29.04.22, the Ukrainian military administration of Luhansk Oblast called on the remaining civilian population of Severodonetsk to immediately leave the entire town after a school was shelled. On 28.04.22, the military administration of the occupied Kherson Oblast, that had been appointed by the Russian Federation, announced the intention to introduce the Russian rouble as the region's currency as of 01.05.22 and ruled out a return of the area under Ukrainian control. The Ukrainian government has stated that 35 of the 49 administrative leaders have been abducted by Russian forces since the beginning of the occupation of the territory; 17 of them have been released in the meantime. Media report that pro-Ukrainian rallies in Kherson are continually dispersed by Russian forces using tear gas and stun grenades.

According to Ukrainian media reports, exploding land mines killed one individual and injured several others in the Kyiv region on 28.04.22. Parts of the area had been occupied by Russian forces until early April 2022 during the military attack on Kyiv. On 28.04.22, Kiev's mayor Vitaliy Klitschko warned civilians who had escaped from the city not to return to the city and surrounding areas at present due to the danger from mines and air strikes. In the steel plant "Azovstal" in the port city of Mariupol, which is still held by Ukrainian forces, a building housing a field hospital collapsed on 28.04.22, trapping over 500 injured and medical personnel, according to Ukrainian media reports. With the involvement of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN, an evacuation operation of the remaining civilians on the site began on 01.05.22.

According to UN figures, at least 2,899 civilians have been killed and 3,235 injured in connection with the war up to and including 28.04.22. The Ukrainian Ombudsperson stated on 26.04.22, that over 16,000 people were currently declared missing, a quarter of them from the city of Mariupol. UNHCR estimates that the number of people who have fled Ukraine may well rise to 8.3 million this year, with more than 5.4 million people having already escaped to Ukraine's neighbouring states as of 29.04.22.

Venezuela

Reform of the supreme court

Following the reform decision of January 2022 to reduce the supreme court's seats from 32 to 20, the new judges were appointed on 26.04.22 after a long delay.

The NGO Acceso a la Justicia, as well as opposition representatives have criticised the appointment of several people who were already serving their second term in this body, even though the tenure is limited to twelve years by the constitution.

Violence in the border region with Colombia

In its monthly report "Curva de la Violencia", the NGO Fundaredes registered for the month of March 2022 a total of 71 homicides, 24 cases of disappearances and 23 armed clashes in six states bordering Colombia (Zulia, Bolívar, Táchira, Apure, Amazonas and Falcón). Violence has thus increased by over 14 percent compared to the same period last year.

Deadly tuberculosis outbreaks in prisons

Cases of tuberculosis have been reported from several prisons in the country in recent weeks. On 23.04. and 24.04.22, two prisoners died in the prison of Tocuyito, Carabobo, presumably of tuberculosis. In Zulia state, a video posted on Twitter by prisoners at the Centro de Arrestos de San Carlos appears to document that a prisoner died in this detention centre in the course of a tuberculosis outbreak.

Yemen

Over 700 civilians became victims of abduction or disappearance, says NGO

According to the annual report of the Yemeni NGO Abductees Mothers Association, at least 586 civilians were abducted in 2021, and 134 others were victims of enforced disappearances. Most cases are blamed on the Houthis, followed by the secessionist Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the internationally recognised government. Aden, Sanaa and Taiz were the geographical focus of the incidents.

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