



# Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

9 May 2022

## Afghanistan

### **Security situation: Resistance strives for cooperation / Taliban defectors**

On 05.05.22, National Resistance Front (NRF) leader Ahmad Massoud proposed the formation of a NRF high council, apparently designed to unite all the fragmented resistance groups. On 08.05.22, the NRF and the National Liberation Front (NLF) fought together for the first time against the Taliban in Baghlan province. On 05.05.22, the NRF reportedly captured up to ten villages (including Band Barq) in Warsaj district, Takhar province. In response, the Taliban deployed their Badri suicide bomber brigade to the area on 07.05.22. In Samangan province, an Uzbek Taliban commander was arrested on 05.05.22 for allegedly helping the NRF. On 07.05.22, a total of 300 Pashtun Taliban were moved to nearby Badakhshan province to replace Tajik and Uzbek Taliban in the region. The latter were partially driven from their bases and disarmed. On 08.05.22, Taliban intelligence chief Malik Dara defected to the NRF in Panjshir province. On the same day, about 20 Taliban were killed in fierce fighting between the NRF and the Taliban in Panjshir. The Taliban have denied all the above reports on their official Twitter page.

### **Persecution situation and governance**

On 07.05.22, the Taliban passed their most restrictive decree since coming to power. All women in the country are now obliged to wear a full-body covering (burqa). If a woman is found in public without a burqa, her male guard is to be held accountable. Women who do not follow this dress code at work will be dismissed. A new department has reportedly been set up in the ministry of virtue to monitor the decree. According to reports of 02.05.22, the Taliban have also stopped issuing car driving licences to women. The international community has expressed concern that the Taliban will no longer fulfil their promises on women's rights. On 03.05.22, the Taliban killed a former employee of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) in Herat province.

### **Humanitarian situation: nationwide heavy rains and flash floods**

On 04.05.22, heavy rains and flash floods were reported in many provinces. Apparently, 29 people died and 40 were injured across the country and many houses were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. In Baghlan province, four people were killed by floods. In Maidan Wardak province, a woman was killed by lightning, and farmland was destroyed by floods. In Badghis province, five people died due to floods and about 20 houses were destroyed. In Parwan province, two children were killed, two people were injured and about 30 animals were killed.

### **Afghanistan drops 34 places in World Press Freedom Ranking**

On 03.05.22, Reporters Without Borders reported on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day that Afghanistan had fallen 34 positions in the ranking from 122 to 156 (out of 180). According to Amnesty International, the main reasons are the Taliban's censorship of the media landscape and the intimidation, imprisonment or killing of journalists for unwelcome reporting. Since the takeover, 60 percent of the journalists have lost their jobs (especially female journalists), about 230 media companies have closed down, and the Taliban are exercising strong censorship (e.g., foreign news such as BBC or VOA are no longer allowed to be broadcast).

## **Armenia**

### **Arrests at demonstration in Yerevan**

250 people were arrested on 02.05.22 during protests against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Police used extreme force against the protesters in the capital Yerevan. Those arrested are accused of resisting state authority. Thousands of opposition supporters had already set up tents in the centre of Yerevan on 30.04 and 01.05.22 and blocked important streets with rubbish bins and benches. They are demanding the resignation of Pashinyan, who won a new election only last year. About 20,000 demonstrators protested against a planned peace agreement with neighbouring Azerbaijan and demanded Pashinyan's resignation. The opposition accuses Pashinyan of planning to cede all of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan (cf. BN of 02.05.22).

## **Benin**

### **Deadly clashes between cattle breeders and farmers**

Four people died in violent clashes between herders and farmers in Tchaourou (Borgou département) on 05.05.22. The incident was reportedly triggered by a dispute between a farmer and a herdsman that ended fatally for one of the participants.

## **Burkina Faso**

### **Dead in attacks**

About a dozen members of the Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP) vigilante group and two civilians were killed on 07.05.22 in an attack by unidentified gunmen on a convoy travelling between Gorgadji and Dori (Sahel region). Two members of the security forces and four members of the VDP were killed on 05.05.22 in an attack by unidentified individuals near Sollé (North Region). On the same day, five gendarmerie forces and about 20 of the attackers were killed in an attack by unknown assailants in Ouanobé (Sanmatenga region).

### **Prison stormed**

In the night to 08.05.22, unidentified armed men stormed the prison in Nouna (Boucle du Mouhoun region) and freed about 60 prisoners. One individual was reportedly killed in the incident.

## **China**

### **Hong Kong: New chief executive elected**

On 08.05.22, former security secretary and sole candidate John Lee was elected as the new chief executive of the Special Administrative Region with 1,416 votes out of 1,424 by the Hong Kong election committee. Lee is known for his unwavering loyalty to the Chinese central government in Beijing and will succeed incumbent chief executive Carrie Lam on 01.07.22.

## **Colombia**

### **Clan del Golfo chief Otoniel extradited**

On 04.05.22, former Clan del Golfo leader Dairo Antonio Usaga, alias Otoniel, was extradited to the USA and remanded in custody in New York. Colombian President Iván Duque wrote on Twitter "Today, legality, the rule of law, the security forces and justice triumphed" and compared Otoniel to Pablo Escobar. Earlier, the supreme administrative court had lifted a provisional order suspending the clan chief's extradition (cf. BN of 02.05.22). Otoniel, who according to the Colombian authorities has trafficked about 200 tons of cocaine a year with the Clan del Golfo, had been arrested in October 2021 in the province of Antioquia. In addition to drug trafficking, Otoniel is also accused of murder, extortion, kidnapping and recruiting minors. In the US, he is charged with drug trafficking, conspiracy, and illegal possession of firearms; he is on the US Drug Enforcement Administration's most wanted list.

### **Clan del Golfo carries out several attacks**

At least 100 vehicles have been destroyed in isolated attacks on highways across northern Colombia by members of the Clan del Golfo. Earlier, the clan announced an "armed strike" to protest against the extradition of former leader Otoniel. Interior minister Daniel Palacios has stated that 44 people were arrested after the attacks, which mainly targeted the provinces of Antioquia, Bolivar, Cordoba and Sucre. In addition, defence minister Diego Molano announced the creation of a search block unit of the armed forces as well as increased patrols in cities, municipalities and along highways. Furthermore, the reward was increased to approximately USD 1.2 million for information leading to the arrest of the new clan leaders Wilver Giraldo and Jesus Avila Villadiego, alias Sipoas and Chiquito Malo, respectively.

## **Côte d'Ivoire**

### **Former confidant of ex-President Soros arrested**

On 05.05.22 Abdoulaye Fofana, a former confidant of ex-President Guillaume Soro, was reportedly arrested in Abidjan. According to a different source, he was arrested in Burkina Faso and then extradited.

Guillaume Soro had been sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment in 2021 for undermining state security and other offences. He lives in exile.

## **DR Congo**

### **Governors elected**

On 06.05.22, a total of 22 governors were elected in 14 of the country's 26 provinces. According to the official results presented by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI), supporters of President Félix Tshisekedi (coalition Union sacrée de la nation) won in eleven of the 14 provinces. Three women were among those elected. One post went to the Front commun pour le Congo (FCC) of former President Joseph Kabila. Run-off elections are required in the remaining two provinces. The elections were held after the leaders of the provinces concerned (mostly FCC members) had been ousted for incompetence and corruption, among other things.

### **Protest rally dispersed**

On 06.05.22, police cracked down on a civil society and opposition protest rally in front of the parliament in Kinshasa; several people were injured. The protesters were demanding a political agreement on ongoing electoral reforms.

### **Ituri: Dozens killed in gold mine raid**

According to initial reports, at least 35 people were killed in an attack on a gold mine near Mungwalu on 08.05.22. Apparently, several more people were abducted. The militia Coopérative de développement du Congo (CODECO) is blamed for the attack. The military has confirmed the attack, without, initially, giving any numbers.

## **Egypt**

### **Sinai Peninsula: Several members of the security authorities killed**

The authorities have informed that at least 11 soldiers were killed and five others injured in an attack by gunmen on a water pumping station east of the Suez Canal; the local offshoot of IS has claimed responsibility for the attack. For several years, members of the Islamist group have been carrying out attacks, especially in the northern provinces of the Sinai Peninsula, targeting in particular security forces and infrastructure. An Egyptian military operation that had begun in 2013 and was intensified in 2018 is directed against this group and other violent Islamist insurgents.

## Gambia

### **Situation of press freedom and safety of media professionals, GPU deplors anti-media rhetoric**

Gambia, which in 2017 had ranked 147 out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index of the NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF), has improved by almost 100 places since the change of government and now ranks 50 in the index. According to a media report of 04.05.22, the head of the RSF office in West Africa Sadibou Marong highlighted progress in press freedom since President Adama Barrow took office. Attacks against media workers have decreased and a diverse and pluralistic media landscape has emerged in the country. On 03.05.22, the Gambia Press Union (GPU) reminded the government to expedite reforms to the repressive media legislation, which have been pending for years. The media laws are still partly in force and constrain journalists in their work. Under the previous government, the media laws had been used to persecute media workers.

According to media reports of early May 2022, the GPU, the Civil Society Coalition and other organisations criticised President Barrow for his sharp remarks and personal attacks against civic activist Madi Jobarteh on the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Fitr. Barrow had described the activist as a threat to state security and at the same time accused the media of contributing to the destabilisation of the country by giving Jobarteh a platform. The government could not continue to tolerate criticism from people intending to "set the country on fire", Barrow had added. Madi Jobarteh, who has repeatedly criticised the government for mismanagement of public funds and corrupt practices, has received several death threats in the meantime, media reports say. According to the GPU, more than 15 physical and verbal attacks on media workers have been recorded in the last five years, perpetrated by people involved in politics and their supporters in a climate of impunity. For instance, Barrow's allegations of biased reporting in 2018 and 2021 had instigated his followers as well as state officials to violent attacks on media workers. On 19.04.22, the GPU criticised the leader of the main opposition United Democratic Party (UDP) Ousainou Darboe for his statements against journalist Pa Nderry Touray. The GPU called on all political actors to refrain from anti-media rhetoric as this may incite their supporters to physical or verbal attacks against media representatives.

## Guinea

### **Investigation launched against ex-President Alpha Condé**

On 04.05.22, the attorney general of Guinea announced that former President Alpha Condé and 26 members of his former government have been investigated for violence in connection with his candidacy for a third term in 2020. They are accused of accessory to murder, assault, kidnapping, destruction of property, and other offences.

### **Transition period announced**

On 30.04.22 Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, head of the military junta, announced that he opted for a 39-month transition period before a return to civilian rule. This time frame, he said, was the result of consultations and would be submitted to the transitional parliament for approval as a next step. It remains unclear whether the proposed period will be accepted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

## India / Pakistan

### **Heatwave in South Asia**

The two South Asian countries India and Pakistan are currently being hit by an extreme heatwave. India has recorded temperatures of over 45 degrees Celsius in nine states. In the Indian state of Maharashtra, the heat has claimed two dozen lives. India has experienced the hottest March and April since weather records began, Pakistan the hottest March since 1961.

## Iran

### **Press Freedom Ranking 2022: Iran falls to 178 out of 180**

the 20th edition of the annual Reporters Without Borders (RSF) press freedom index, Iran is ranked 178 out of 180 for the year 2022 (compared to 174<sup>th</sup> position in the previous year), thus falling behind Turkmenistan. Eritrea and

North Korea are at the bottom of the ranking. Since the current edition, the press freedom ranking is based on five indicators with a new methodology: political context, legal framework, economic context, socio-cultural context, and security. According to the current RSF barometer for Iran, at least eleven professional journalists and four bloggers are currently in detention.

#### **Student protest against security patrols at universities**

According to media reports of 28.04.22, students of the faculty of science and technology in east Tehran have rallied against increased security measures and attacks by security forces including the use of motorised patrols. Apparently, members of a student association were attacked and beaten by these patrols. In addition, controls have been intensified regarding the dress code for female students (hijab rules) at university institutions, the reports say. The protesters demanded, among other things, that the security forces refrain from harassing and interfering in personal matters and that the security guards be identifiable by name tags in the future. According to social media reports, similar protests took place at the medical faculty in Tabriz (East Azerbaijan province).

#### **Intensified security measures in Khuzestan province**

Foreign media report a deterioration of the security situation in Khuzestan in the southwest of the country since 06.05.22. Apparently, this is related to calls on social media to participate in protests against massive price increases, especially for flour products such as bread. According to the BBC's Persian edition, security forces in the city of Izeh have suppressed protest gatherings, sometimes violently. Most towns in the province, including Ahvaz, Susangard, Shadegan and Behbahan, have experienced prolonged outages and a slowdown in mobile internet, the reports say. Apparently, there have been arrests of citizens in several towns; however, no details were given on the number of people arrested. Already in July 2021, Khuzestan province had been the scene of rallies lasting several weeks due to water shortages and frequent power cuts. The protests were ended by security forces, sometimes violently. In addition, access to the internet was blocked (cf. BN of 26.07.21).

### **Iraq**

#### **Situation in Sinjar**

On 08.05.22, the Iraqi army informed that it had now taken over about 20 checkpoints in the region from the PKK-affiliated Yazidi Sinjar Resistance Units. Since the defeat of IS, parts of the region have been controlled by these units. One Iraqi soldier and one militiaman had died in fighting between the Iraqi army and the militia; both sides had made great efforts to avoid further escalations afterwards. In the course of the fighting, at least 4,000 civilians had fled the region, most of them were internally displaced people who had returned home. The first rallies against the presence of both the army and the militia were held on 07.05.22, with protesters demanding that the Iraqi Federal Police provide security for the region and that armies and militias withdraw.

#### **Clashes in Maysan**

On 04.05.22, eight people were killed in clashes over farmland in Maysan province. Initial reports say that part of an extended family had been using state land, with another part of the family claiming a share, which led to an armed confrontation. An intensive search for the perpetrators is currently underway.

### **Lebanon**

#### **Elections**

On 06.05.22, the parliamentary elections for expatriate Lebanese began, first in ten neighbouring countries, then on 08.05.22 in 48 predominantly western countries. The election in Lebanon itself is scheduled for 15.05.22. So far, initial results have shown a very high voter turnout of expatriate Lebanese. All political parties have called on people to cast ballots. Due to the complex electoral law and the religious proportionality among the members of parliament, the result can hardly be reliably estimated by demoscopic surveys.

## **Montenegro / North Macedonia**

### **RSF world index 2022 shows both improvements and problems in media freedom**

Recent media reports, referring to the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) 2022 Press Freedom Ranking published on 03.05.22, point to ongoing problems in all Balkan countries. Journalists in the region worked in a highly polarised political environment and faced threats from criminal groups, the reports said. Polarisation was also the result of a "globalised and unregulated online information space" that encouraged fake news and propaganda. While significant improvements were registered for both North Macedonia's ranking (57 out of 180, compared to 90 last year) and that of Montenegro (63 compared to 104 last year), "widespread misinformation" and a lack of institutional transparency, among other things, were contributing to a decrease in trust in the media in North Macedonia, which still had a environment favourable to press freedom and allowed critical reporting. In Montenegro, the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of the press continued to be threatened by political interference and economic pressure. In both countries, journalists were reportedly still at risk of threats and attacks.

## **Morocco**

### **Pardons for Eid Al Fitr**

On the occasion of the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, King Mohammed VI has pardoned a total of 958 people. Among them are 622 people whose prison sentence was reduced, 191 whose fine was cancelled, 83 whose remaining prison sentence was fully or partially remitted, and seven people whose prison sentence was remitted but the fine remained. One life sentence was commuted to a limited one. Among those pardoned are 29 convicted of extremism and terrorism. They were pardoned after having officially rejected all forms of extremism and terrorism and expressed their attachment to the "immutable and sacred values of the nation and the national institutions".

## **Myanmar**

### **Another five years in prison for Aung San Suu Kyi**

On 27.04.22, a court controlled by the military junta sentenced de facto head of government Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been ousted from office on 01.02.21, to a further five years in prison for corruption. In December 2021 and January 2022, she had already been sentenced to a total of six years' imprisonment for inciting sedition, using unregistered radios, and allegedly violating Corona regulations.

### **Fighting and deadly violence in Magway, Sagaing, Kayin, Mon, Shan, Naypyidaw, and Mandalay**

Myanmar media report that between 08.04. and 03.05.22 there were again large-scale military raids and clashes between the army (Tatmadaw) and People's Defence Forces (PDF), some of whom are fighting alongside ethnic armed organisations (EAO). Junta forces burnt down hundreds of houses in more than 30 villages in the Magway and Sagaing regions. Several villages as well as camps of displaced people were completely destroyed and at least 36 civilians and seven PDF members lost their lives. Armed clashes were also reported from Kayin, Mon and Shan states and in the capital Naypyidaw. Anti-regime forces claim to have killed around 100 police and military personnel across the country in this period. In Mandalay, the recently formed pro-military group Thway Thout Aphwe has claimed responsibility for the killings of three civilians, stating that their aim was to "wipe out" members and supporters of the former ruling party National League for Democracy (NLD) and the PDFs, as well as their family members. Similar groups have appeared in Yangon and Taunggyi.

## **Niger**

### **Rising refugee numbers**

The UNHCR has stated that between January and mid-April 2022, Niger registered more than 36,000 people fleeing from the neighbouring states of Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria to escape crises and conflicts. Most of them are women and children. They have settled in some of the driest areas of Niger, which is worsening their supply

situation. In addition, soaring food prices and a food crisis triggered by the meagre 2021 harvest are squeezing refugees and local communities alike. UNHCR expects the influx of refugees to continue as long as the situation in neighbouring countries does not improve. About 583,000 refugees, among them some 264,000 internally displaced persons, were living in Niger at the end of March 2022.

## **Nigeria**

### **Military reports success in fight against Islamists and criminals**

The Nigerian military is taking action against criminal and terrorist groups, predominantly in the northern and central parts of the country. In the course of a military operation carried out in Nasarawa State on 20.04 and 21.04.22, the leader of a criminal gang that had been terrorising communities in Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba States was arrested after a gun battle. Five kidnap victims were also reportedly rescued in this operation. On 23.04.22, Nigerian and Nigerien members of the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat jihadist terrorism killed at least 22 Islamist insurgents near Lake Chad after repelling an attack by the group in the region.

In the beginning of May 2022, representatives of the Nigerian military leadership announced to further intensify efforts in the fight against Islamists and criminals. This would also involve training more fighter pilots.

### **Southeast: Success in the fight against FGM**

Media reported on 02.05.22 that a total of 29 communities in Imo State have officially outlawed the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). The public declaration was made by important representatives of local civil society organisations and communities, including traditional rulers, religious leaders and people associated with youth and women groups. According to media reports, the official ban is linked to an anti-FGM programme of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported by the Nigerian government. In Nigeria, local anti-FGM campaigns are not uncommon (cf. BN of 22.02.21).

### **Northwest: Over 50 dead in village raids**

Several attacks by local criminal gangs against small towns in the north of the northwestern state of Zamfara have killed more than 50 people in two days, according to media reports:

On 06.05.22, dozens of gunmen killed at least 50 people in attacks on Sabon Garin Damri, Damri and Kalahe villages in Bakura Local Government Area (LGA), driving hundreds of residents from their homes and stealing livestock before security forces intervened. The following day, gunmen killed seven more people in an attack on Faru and Kauyen Minane villages in neighbouring Maradun LGA in the same state.

## **Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel**

### **West Bank: Several dead and injured in various incidents and clashes**

Hamas has claimed responsibility for an attack on Israeli security forces in the Jewish settlement of Ariel on 29.04.22, in which one person was killed (cf. BN of 02.05.22). According to the statement, the assault was carried out by the al-Qassam Brigade, the military arm of Hamas. The statement came one day after the Israeli military said that the two suspects did not belong to any militant group.

On 07.05.22, clashes broke out between Palestinian protesters and the Israeli military during the demolition of the house of a Palestinian who had killed an Israeli in December 2021 (cf. BN of 20.12.21). Three protesters were injured by live ammunition and tear gas in the incident. Numerous human rights organisations criticise as collective punishment the tactic of demolishing the homes of Palestinian people convicted of killing Israelis. The Israeli authorities, on the other hand, emphasise the deterrent effect of this action.

On 08.05.22, a Palestinian was killed near the village of Tulkarem while trying to cross the security fence separating the West Bank from Israel.

On the same day, a civilian inside the West Bank settlement of Telkoa killed an underage Palestinian who had trespassed.

### **East Jerusalem: resumption of Jewish visits to the Temple Mount; clashes**

On 05.05.22, the Israeli military and Palestinian visitors to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound clashed again after Jewish visits were resumed, which had been temporarily suspended (cf. BN of 25.04.22). After the Israeli military stormed the compound, 50 people were reportedly arrested; two Palestinians were subsequently treated in hospital, and one soldier was also slightly injured.

On 08.05.22, a Palestinian attacked an Israeli police officer with a knife near the Damascus Gate, an entrance to the Old City of Jerusalem. He was stopped by shots fired by other policemen. Both men were subsequently treated in hospital.

### **Israel: Three dead in stabbing attacks on Independence Day**

On 05.05.22, the day of the celebration of Israeli independence, two Palestinians killed three Israelis in Elad, a town near Tel Aviv. At least four other people were injured, one of them seriously. On 08.05.22, two men (who the military said were from Jenin, in the north of the West Bank) were arrested near Elad. They confessed to the crime.

The number of people killed in attacks in Israel in recent weeks has risen to 18.

## **Russian Federation**

### **RSF: Situation of press freedom “very serious”**

According to the current press freedom index presented by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on 03.05.22, the situation of the media in Russia has deteriorated further under the impact of the war in Ukraine, and is now classified by the NGO as “very serious” (as distinct from “difficult”). According to an Eastern Europe expert of the organisation, the conditions are comparable to those in the times of the Soviet Union. In the international comparison of a total of 180 countries, the Russian Federation is ranked 155 in the index (last year: 150). Among the reasons for the drop cited by RSF were the closures of the country's last independent national media outlets in March 2022, which were either formally ordered or enforced by reprisals, as well as the media legislation, which was further tightened after the beginning of the war (cf. BN of 07.03.22).

## **Somalia**

### **Attack on AU military base**

On 03.05.22, at least 30 Burundian military personnel were killed and 20 others injured in an explosive attack by al-Shabaab on an African Union (AU) base in El-Baraf village, Middle Shabelle, official sources report. Al-Shabaab has claimed to have killed 173 military personnel in the assault which was one of the largest in recent years and the first on the new AU mission African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) which replaced the former African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in April 2022.

## **Sri Lanka**

### **New state of emergency declared; Prime Minister submits resignation**

In response to nationwide strikes and ongoing protests against government mismanagement and corruption, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa imposed a state of emergency for the second time in five weeks on 06.05.22 (cf. BN of 04.04.22). The measure was taken to ensure public order and to maintain supply chains and services, it was stated. Earlier, the police used water cannons and tear gas against protesters in Colombo who reportedly wanted to storm the parliament and the houses of government members again. On 09.05.22, protesters and government supporters clashed in Colombo after the latter reportedly attacked a protest camp. Police forces intervened with tear gas and water cannons; at least 78 people were injured. A curfew was subsequently imposed. Also on 09.05.22, various sources reported that Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa submitted his resignation. In the first week of May, the country's cash reserves dropped from USD 1.9 billion to USD 50 million (approx. EUR 47.5 million, as of 09.05.22).



## **Sudan**

### **Ongoing demonstrations**

Opposition activists have reported that on 03.05.22, several detainees began a hunger strike in Soba prison. They are political prisoners who want to force either their release or a fair trial. They are supported by several organisations, which in turn have called for support from society.

The opposition to the military takeover, organised in a large number of regional resistance committees, called for a march on the Republican and Presidential Palace in Khartoum to take place on 05.05.2022. The committees of the city of Khartoum, the greater Omdurman area, the city of Bahri, as well as two other local committees had significant participation in the organisation of the rally. In a statement of 04.05.22, the resistance committees reiterated their position not to enter into any negotiations, partnership, or legitimacy with the military government or to grant it. At the same time, a nationwide call went out for civilian disobedience to end the military coup of 25.10.21. The rally planned to be held in Khartoum was stopped by security forces on the way to the palace. One protester was run over by a security vehicle and died in the incident. Also, a total of 24 people were injured. According to reports, the security forces used violence in all the demonstrations that took place. In Omdurman, even live ammunition was used against the protesters.

### **Security situation in Darfur**

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), between 85,000 and 115,000 people have been displaced by the recent outbreaks of violence in West Darfur (see BN of 02.05.22 and 25.04.22). In total, at least 16 villages have been attacked, at least 200 people killed and more than 130 injured. In addition, there were at least three reports of rape during the fighting. According to OCHA, the region currently lacks water, food, shelter, medicine, and general health care. Although the past few days have been quiet, all transports of goods and people in the region are being escorted by the military.

## **Syria**

### **Northern Syria: Turkey announces resettlement of additional 1 million people**

During the inauguration ceremony of new residential units in northern Syria to house refugees from Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gave a video address on 04.05.22 in which he announced the construction of more houses for one million Syrians. Already, tens of thousands of brick buildings have been erected in the areas in northern Syria where the Turkish military is present. The Turkish president said that more than 57,000 houses have been completed in Idlib governorate alone, housing more than 50,000 families.

According to official figures from Turkey, 500,000 Syrians have already returned to Syria from Turkey since 2016. However, UNHCR has documented only about 130,000 returnees for the same period. According to UN estimates, more than 5.7 million people have left Syria since 2011; about 3.7 million of them have fled to Turkey.

The Turkish repatriation programme is internationally controversial: various human rights organisations accuse the Turkish government of resettling people from Syria against their will, or at least under great economic pressure. The resettlement takes place in the areas with Turkish military presence in northern Syria, where, moreover, only a minority of the refugees had reportedly lived before.

### **Increasing deterioration of the supply situation due to lack of international aid payments**

Rising global food prices are having a negative impact on the Syrian population. With more than 90 percent of the population living in poverty, families increasingly need to resort to coping strategies such as skipping meals or reducing portions, especially among adults, according to media reports. In particular, many IDPs in north-western Syria are dependent on food aid. In the areas of the last rebel stronghold controlled by the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), which is the largest player in the provision of food aid, has already had to cut monthly rations, as has been reported by the media.

In 2022, ten of Idlib's 50 hospitals as well as 12 primary health care centres lost funding, forcing them to close down, Amnesty International said in a report. Other health facilities were at risk of closure in the near future. Medical facilities in the north-western areas under the control of the HTS were relying entirely on funding from the international community to provide free health services and medication. Over the past ten months,

international aid to the health sector dropped by more than 40 percent due to the overall reduction of international assistance to Syria, the AI report said.

## **Tunisia**

### **Media workers protest against increasing repression and intimidation**

Media report that on 05.05.22, journalists in Tunis protested against the increasing repression of the press by state authorities. Since President Kais Saied had deprived parliament of power in July 2021, journalists critical of the government have been subjected to increasing pressure and intimidation by the authorities, the Tunisian Journalists' Association said. In the press freedom ranking published by Reporters Without Borders, Tunisia's rank dropped to 94 out of 180 countries in 2022 (from 73 in 2021).

### **Support for the President of the Republic**

Hundreds of demonstrators gathered in the centre of Tunis on 08.05.22 to express their support for President Saied and his political course. At the beginning of May 2022, Saied announced the start of a national dialogue led by a commission. However, he excluded the participation of critical opposition groups.

## **Turkey**

### **Report of the Coalition for Women in Journalism**

On 03.05.22, the Coalition for Women in Journalism (CFWIJ) reported that between January and May 2022, the organisation recorded a total of 139 incidents of threats, violence and rights violations against female journalists worldwide. Next to Russia, Turkey had the highest number of assaults against female journalists, the report said. Turkey topped the list with 63 cases of legal harassment, physical violence, and imprisonment.

### **Arrests of suspected members of the Gülen movement**

On 04.05.22, eight former police employees and teaching staff were arrested in western Edirne province. They had previously been dismissed from the public service because of alleged links to the Gülen movement. Some of the arrested people are spouses. They are accused of membership in a terrorist organisation and/or of aiding and abetting a terrorist organisation.

## **Ukraine**

### **Development of the fighting and the humanitarian situation**

The main area of hostilities in Ukraine is currently the Donbas region, with particular intensive fighting near Kharkiv, from Gulyai Polya to Zaporizhzhya and from Kherson along the right bank of the Dnepr river to Kryvyi Rih. The supply situation regarding drinking water and food in the embattled towns of Popasna and Rubizhne is critical, according to official Ukrainian information. Due to conflict-related damage to a filter station in Popasna, about one million inhabitants of the Luhansk oblast are apparently cut off from tap water supply. Ukrainian media also report that since 03.05.22 a large-scale assault has been taking place on the Azovstal complex in Mariupol, which remains under the control of Ukrainian forces, while according to official Russian sources a blockade strategy continues to be pursued. Both Russian and Ukrainian media report that a pass system has been partially introduced in the occupied territories, which serves to control the population and further restricts the movement of people until they receive a pass. An intensification can be observed regarding the rhetoric of the Ukrainian side. The head of Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council Oleksiy Danilov, as well as presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych have stated that Russia cannot end the war with a peace agreement, but only with surrender. Up to and including 04.05.22, at least 3,280 civilians have been killed and 3,451 injured in connection with the conflict, according to UN figures. 5,801,159 people have fled Ukraine so far (as of 06.05.22), and an estimated 7.7 million people have fled within the country (as of 05.05.22), the UN said.

## Yemen

### **Saudi Arabia releases prisoners**

The Saudi-led coalition has informed that on 06.05.22, a total of 163 prisoners were released. The Houthis initially only confirmed the release of 126 people, the Red Cross 117 for the time being. 108 of those released were apparently transferred to Aden, which is held by the government with the support of the coalition; another 37 were brought overland to Yemen. Nine fighters of foreign origin have been handed over to their respective embassies. The release is part of the current ceasefire agreements. Similar plans had repeatedly failed in recent years.

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