



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Security situation

On 16.05.22, the Taliban engaged in skirmishes with Tajik border guards in the border town of Sher Khan in Kunduz province. On 19.05.22, the Tajik military launched operations on the border with Afghanistan after suspected armed groups from Afghanistan incited insurgency in Tajikistan's border provinces. On the same day, the Taliban reportedly closed the Sher Khan border crossing and confiscated Tajik trucks. Tajikistan is one of the more unstable Central Asian countries, which sees the Taliban's seizure of power as a threat to the region and is apparently sheltering and supporting the National Resistance Front (NRF, also Tajik).

On 17.05.22, several former Afghan politicians, among them Abdul Raschid Dostum, Mohammed Mohaqiq, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and Atta Mohammed Noor, met in the Turkish capital Ankara and issued a statement proclaiming a "Supreme Council of National Resistance to Save Afghanistan". The declaration calls for resistance against the Taliban in the northern provinces. On 19.05.22, the Afghanistan freedom movement Tahreek-e-Azadi Afghanistan claimed responsibility for an attack on a convoy of the 209th Al-Fath Taliban Corps in Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh province.

Governance and persecution situation

On 16.05.22, the Taliban by decree dissolved as “unnecessary” five important institutions of the former republic, among them the Afghan independent human rights commission, the secretariats of both the lower and upper houses of parliament, the national security council, the high council for national reconciliation and the independent commission for monitoring the implementation of the constitution.

On 19.05.22 it was reported that the Taliban arrested about 35 young men from Panjshir in Kabul last week and took them to unknown places. NRF reported on 20.05.22 that the Taliban relocated 27 families, presumably relatives of NRF fighters, from their homes in Andarab district (Baghlan).

Also on 19.05.22, the Taliban's virtue ministry issued a binding order that all female TV presenters must cover their faces and thus wear a full-body veil (burqa) in their programmes. The same applies to female employees of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Already on 07.05.22 the Taliban had ordered all women to wear a burqa, which had led to protests of many women in Kabul (cf. BN of 09.05.22).

Angola

Cabinda: Conference stopped by police

On 21.05.22, police stopped a conference organised by two human rights NGOs to discuss peace in Cabinda. Citing the organisers, media reported that it was already the second time that police had intervened. Among the participants in the conference were clergy and lawyers. Apparently, police "besieged" the venue, a hotel in the main town of the same name in Cabinda province, which is separated from the rest of Angola by the DR Congo's access

to the sea. The event had to be stopped quickly. The police cited "instructions from above" and the non-fulfilment of legal formalities as explanations for stopping the event.

Burkina Faso

HRW: Rising violence against civilians

Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported on 16.05.22 that attacks on civilians by Islamist groups and government security forces and vigilantes (Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie - VDP) are on the rise in the country's worsening and expanding conflict. Since 2016, armed Islamist groups (al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb AQIM) or groups associated with the IS in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) have been responsible for hundreds of killings, summary executions and rapes of civilians, as well as looting, burning of villages and destruction of infrastructure facilities. In their counter-terrorism operations, both government security forces and vigilantes have unlawfully killed hundreds of civilians and suspected Islamist militants and carried out enforced disappearances, fuelling recruitment into armed groups, the HRW report says. The majority of the victims are ethnic Fulani (Ful, Peulh). According to HRW, the fighting has forced 1.8 million people from their homes.

Analysts say that attacks by the Islamists appeared designed to compel widespread displacement from towns perceived to support the government, the HRW report continues. Apparently, Islamists are concentrating recruitment efforts on the nomadic Fulani. This has inflamed tensions with other largely agrarian communities, notably the Foulbe, Mossi, Dogon and Gourmantché who have been the targets of most armed Islamist attacks. Apparently, there were many children among the Islamist fighters, the HRW report said.

Dead in attacks

On 19.05.22, an attack by unidentified gunmen on a military unit left 11 military personnel dead in Madjoari (Est region). At least 15 of the attackers were killed or incapacitated.

Reports of 16.05.22 say that a total of 13 members of the Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP) vigilante group and about 12 civilians were killed in two attacks by unidentified individuals in Guessel and near Salmossi (Sahel region) on 14.05.22. An attack in Kompienga (Est region) on the same day left about 15 civilians and at least two VDP members dead.

Chad

Civil society activists arrested after protests

According to media reports, at least six activists were arrested by the security authorities in connection with the anti-French protests that took place on 14.05.22. The detainees, among them several leaders of the local alliance of civil society organisations called Wakit Tama, are accused of disturbing public order and of vandalism. The security authorities have stated that seven petrol stations belonging to a French oil company were destroyed and twelve members of the police were injured during the protests of 14.05.22. Wakit Tama has denied the accusations, saying that the destruction was not committed by participants in the rally or only afterwards (cf. BN of 16.05.22).

Colombia

ELN announces ceasefire during presidential elections

On 16.05.22, the guerrilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) announced a ten-day ceasefire for the upcoming presidential elections scheduled to be held on 29.05.22. The unilateral ceasefire is to last from 25.05. to 03.06.22, but the ELN reserves the right of self-defence. According to experts, the ELN is trying to position itself for future peace talks, which had ended under President Iván Duque in 2019 after an attack at a police academy that killed 21 people. In the current communication, the ELN hinted that a new solution might be negotiated once Duque's successor is elected and has taken over office.

DR Congo

LGBTIQ activist in hiding, situation of LGBTIQ persons

According to media reports of 16.05.22, a transgender woman who is a founding member and leader of the LGBTIQ organisation Rainbow Sunrise Mapambazuko finds herself forced into hiding in an unspecified location in eastern Congo, fearing to be killed or arrested. The activist who chose to remain anonymous stated that police had tried to force their way into her house, allegedly on charges of "promoting homosexuality". In 2013, a former leader of the organisation had been subjected to a similar charge, leading to his detention with torture including deprivation of water and food; later, he fled abroad after a failed murder attempt. The transgender activist now reported that prior to her attempted arrest, she had experienced social exclusion, hostility, insults, and threats from the local community who branded her as a jinx and threatened to burn her alive. She was also accused of inciting local youths to homosexuality. The activist's lawyer, who chose to remain anonymous, stated that charges of criminal association, rape and pimping were brought against her by youths and religious groups following a complaint. The accusers want the activist to be imprisoned at all costs, as they consider her work and her sexual orientation "a violation of Congolese morality and a danger to the public," the lawyer said.

While consensual same-sex sexual activity between adults is generally neither criminalised nor punishable in the DRC, there are criminal provisions relating to public decency and sexual violence that are occasionally used in practice as the legal basis to prosecute LGBTIQ persons. According to the media report, Anna Mmolai-Chlamers of the South African human rights group South African Litigation Centre said that the situation of LGBTIQ people in the DRC is increasingly deteriorating.

South Kivu: Killings over witchcraft allegations

A media report says that between 05.05. and 08.05.22, a man and a woman suspected of witchcraft were killed by several people in two different villages in Fizi territory, South Kivu province. According to a local civil society actor, inter-community conflicts in Fizi, Uvira and Mwenga localities (all in South Kivu province) have led to women being killed more frequently on suspicion of witchcraft. The belief in witchcraft is widespread throughout the country and present in all sections of the population. In the reporting year 2021, many cases of witchcraft accusations against women had been made public, especially in the province of South Kivu (cf. BN of 27.09.21 and 13.12.21). Several women were burnt alive there, the report said.

Several deaths in custody

According to the UN information radio Okapi, more deaths have occurred in the overcrowded central prisons of Kakwanga (North Kivu province) and Kindu (Maniema) due to a lack of food and inadequate health care.

Egypt

Criminal court imposes death penalty

On 18.05.22, the criminal court in Alexandria handed down the death penalty to a man who allegedly fatally stabbed a Coptic priest with a knife in the northern Egyptian coastal city in April 2022. The defendant was found guilty of premeditated murder. In the next step, the verdict will be submitted for review to Egypt's Grand Mufti, the highest Islamic legal authority; however, this is considered a formality in death penalty cases.

El Salvador

Higher sentences for sexual offences

The legislative assembly has increased the sentence for rape and aggravated sexual assault. While article 158 of the penal code previously provided for prison sentences of six to ten years, the new level of penalty is twelve years and can be increased by up to one third if the perpetrator is from the family circle or a carrier of a sexually transmitted disease, or if the victim is under 18 or over 60, was unconscious during the act or became pregnant as a result of the rape. Furthermore, the lawmakers agreed that in cases where the rape was committed by members of terrorist or criminal organisations, the sentence should be between 20 and 30 years of imprisonment.

The Gambia

Extremely cautious reporting behaviour and rare convictions for GBV

According to a media report of 17.05.22, the deputy inspector general of police, Demba Sowe, stated that less than one in ten women who had suffered gender-based violence (GBV) and were willing to seek help would turn to the police. It was only in the minority of GBV cases actually reported to the police that women filed a complaint, he said, and concrete cases of conviction for GBV were even rarer. Referring to survey data from the UN Statistics Division without specifying the time frame, the police inspector general encouraged those affected by GBV to break the culture of silence and approach the police in these cases. GBV surrounded by a culture of silence and widespread impunity are common in The Gambia (cf. BN of 19.04.21).

Activista-Gambia criticises the Barrow government in various ways

According to a media report, the civil society youth movement Activista-Gambia is concerned and disappointed about the increasing curtailment of political space and freedom of expression under the government of President Adama Barrow. Apparently, there has also been an increase in intimidation and threats against civil society organisations and other actors as well as human rights defenders. According to Activista, there are signs of a return to a dictatorial system of government. As evidence, the organisation cited police violence against Kebba Chatty (cf. BN of 14.03.22), the lack of opportunity to exercise basic civil liberties in view of the "perpetual denial of official permits" and verbal assaults by President Adama Barrow directed to the civil society, in particular in the person of civic activist Madi Jobarteh (cf. BN of 09.05.22). Furthermore, the organisation deplored the precarious security situation, land disputes, rampant corruption, and mismanagement, as well as a rise in living costs. In addition, the government was not willing to implement the recommendations of the Janneh Commission report and those of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), Activista-Gambia stated.

Guinea-Bissau

President dissolves parliament; political crisis

On 16.05.22, President Umaro Sissoco Embaló dissolved by decree the unicameral parliament National Popular Assembly (Assembleia Nacional Popular ANP). The move had been expected (cf. BN of 16.05.22). Art. 69 of the constitution states that the president is competent to dissolve the national assembly in case of "grave political crisis". According to media reports, the president has a wide discretion in this regard. However, both political parties and a civil society alliance have questioned Embaló's justification for his decision. The President had accused the ANP of having become a place of "political guerrilla" and "conspiracy", and of having protected corrupt MPs. The opposition sees the main reason for the dissolution of the ANP in its refusal to take up Embaló's proposal for a constitutional revision. Embaló wants to develop the current semi-presidential system of government into a presidential one.

Embaló has set 18.12.22 as the date for the new election. A political analyst interviewed by Radio France International (RFI) considers this seven-month period unconstitutional, stating that elections must be held within 90 days. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Nuno Gomes Nabiam remains in office until the elections are held.

India

Kashmir: Former JKLF leader convicted

The former leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) Mohammed Yasin Malik was found guilty of membership of a terrorist organisation, criminal conspiracy and sedition and other charges in a case that carries a maximum sentence of the death penalty or life imprisonment. The JKLF had been among the first armed separatist rebel groups in Kashmir. Officially, the JKLF was banned by the Indian government in 2019.

Kashmir: Redrawing of assembly constituencies

On 05.05.22, an appointed delimitation commission announced the redrawing of 90 constituencies in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The Hindu-majority in Jammu has now 43 seats and the Muslim-majority in Kashmir Valley has 47. Before, Jammu had 37 seats and Kashmir Valley 46. The disproportionality with regard to

the population living in Jammu and Kashmir is viewed critically. According to the 2011 census, the territory of Jammu and Kashmir has a population of 12.5 million people, 68 percent of whom are Muslims living in the Kashmir Valley, and 28 percent are Hindus living mainly in Jammu.

HRW criticises situation of freedom of expression and press freedom

With reference to ten other human rights organisations, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has drawn attention to the increasing restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of the press in India, saying that Indian authorities are increasingly targeting media workers critical of the government and operators of weblogs by prosecuting them under counter-terrorism laws.

Iran

More arrests

Iranian foreign media reported on 16.05.22 that the well-known sociologist Said Madani has been arrested. Citing the Mehr news agency, which is close to the Revolutionary Guards, the reports said that the arrest was made for suspected links to foreign countries and acting against the security. On 28.12.21, the sociologist had been prevented from leaving the country for the United States and has since been banned from travelling abroad (cf. BN of 17.01.22).

On 18.05.22, another member of a bus drivers' union was apparently arrested by members of the intelligence at his home in Tehran and subsequently transferred to wing 209 of Evin Prison. Two leading members of the union had already been arrested prior to a bus drivers' strike on 16.05.22 (cf. BN of 16.05.22).

Religious minorities: Trial of 26 Baha'i members reopened

Referring to the Persian website of the Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRANA), foreign media report that criminal cases have been reopened against 26 Baha'i members in Shiraz. According to the website, they had been arrested in 2016 and convicted of propaganda against the system, formation of and membership in an anti-regime group with links to hostile states; later, they were released on bail. Six years after their original arrest, the cases have now been resubmitted to the Revolutionary Court in Shiraz for review, presumably due to procedural flaws. A first court hearing on the matter took place on 17.05.22. Details of the proceedings have not yet been reported.

Freedom of the press: Reprisals against media workers during protests against price increases

According to foreign media reports, journalists were among those summoned and threatened by the intelligence ministry during the recent protests against rising food prices. This information was provided by the head of the Iran-Afghanistan section of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) who also pointed to ongoing disruptions and blocking of the internet in several provinces, making it difficult to report on the ongoing events.

Economic crisis

The economic crisis in Iran is getting worse. The latest exacerbation was triggered by the government's decision to abolish the official exchange rate of 4,200 toman to one dollar (real exchange rate on the black market 1: 28,000; as of early May 2022). Until now, the Iranian government has used the official exchange rate to keep affordable the prices of basic foodstuffs, everyday goods and rents. Experts have therefore warned in advance of the abolishment of the official exchange rate and the resulting inflation, especially for imported products. However, the government insisted on the measure, which is also supported by Revolutionary Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, referring to the chronic budget deficit. Low-income families are to be supported with additional income subsidies to cushion the price increase. Flour had made the start at the end of April, and subsequently the prices for certain types of bread and pasta were liberalised. This was followed by a price increase for cooking oil, dairy products, eggs and poultry on 12.05.22. Consumers started to hoard food supplies in some towns, with queues forming in front of many shops. The value of the national currency to the dollar fell by 2,000 toman to 30,000 toman within a week. The protests triggered by the measures were most recently concentrated in the provinces of Khuzestan and Chaharmahal va Bakhtiari and the city of Golpayegan (Isfahan province). According to unofficial reports, six people have been killed in clashes with the security forces.

Iraq

Fight against the IS

On 17.05.22, two members of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) were killed in clashes with IS fighters in Salah al-Din. The Iraqi Air Force carried out air strikes against IS targets in Makhmour on 16.05.22, killing six suspected IS supporters. Already on 15.05.22, Iraqi forces and Peshmerga fighters conducted a joint anti-IS operation near Makhmour, killing two suspected IS terrorists. Makhmour is located in disputed areas between the Iraqi central government and the Kurdish Regional Government; the resulting security vacuum has strengthened the IS presence in the area.

Missile attack against PMF

In the night of 20.05.22, PMF positions near Tuz Khurmatu (Salah al-Din province) were attacked with Katyusha rockets; no personal injuries were reported. So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but similar incidents are mostly attributed to pro-Iranian militias.

PKK conflict: Attack on Turkish military base

On 15.05.22, PKK fighters attacked a Turkish military base in the Sidakan district of Erbil; at least four PKK supporters were killed in the incident. Due to the ongoing conflict between the PKK and Turkey, 212 villages in Erbil alone have been abandoned in the last 30 years, according to local authorities.

Six killed in drone attack

On 21.05.22 at least six people, among them three civilians, were killed in drone attacks on Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq. This was reported by local authorities who blame Turkey for the assault. Turkey regularly carries out attacks in northern Iraq, where the PKK maintains bases and training camps. The latest drone attacks targeted the mountainous regions of the Chamchamal district west of the city of Sulaymaniyah and the Makhmur refugee camp.

Jordan

King announces restrictions on Prince Hamza's freedom of movement

King Abdullah announced on 19.05.22 that his younger half-brother Prince Hamza would be restricted in his freedom of movement as well as in his ability to communicate with the outside world. The palace justified the measures with the threat Prince Hamza would pose to the monarchy and the nation, as he was still striving to take over the throne after his alleged coup attempt (cf. BN of 12.04.21).

Several killed in drug smuggling attempt

The Jordanian military stated that on 22.05.22 that four people were killed while attempting to smuggle drugs from Syria across the border into Jordan. Other individuals involved were wounded, some more were able to retreat to Syria unharmed.

Lebanon

Parliamentary election results

On 17.05.22 the official results of the parliamentary elections were announced: The two Shiite parties Hezbollah and Amal won a total of 28 of the 128 seats. However, due to losses by allied parties, the pro-Hezbollah alliance has lost its overall parliamentary majority. The Christian and pro-Saudi Forces Libanaises (FL) secured 19 seats (2018: 15), while the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), which is also Christian-dominated but allied with Hezbollah, gained 17 seats (2018: 20) and is no longer the strongest Christian party. Independent anti-establishment candidates, some of them from the protest movement, did surprisingly well and secured 16 seats. Now, no bloc has a majority in the newly elected parliament, which may make it difficult to form a government in the near future. Contrary to initial information, voter turnout was not 41 percent, but was corrected to 49 percent by the authorities.

Supply situation

After the Lebanese Central Bank defaulted on payments for wheat, six mills have temporarily stopped working; the resulting shortage of flour has greatly reduced the supply of bread in bakeries and supermarkets. On 18.05.22, the price of bread on the black market was around EUR 19. On 19.05.22, an agreement was announced regarding flour production, and at the same time the economy ministry announced the new prices for government-subsidised bread, according to which a kilo of bread now costs just under EUR 10. The price of fuel on 19.05.22 was around EUR 17.40 per litre of regular petrol and more than EUR 21 for a litre of diesel. This development is due to rising world market prices and a further depreciation of the LBP against the USD.

Libya

Violent clashes in Tripoli

Media report that on 17.05.22, violent clashes broke out between armed groups in Tripoli after Fathi Bashagha, Prime Minister of the Government of National Stability (GNS) elected by parliament in March 2022, tried to enter the capital with the militias supporting him and take over the affairs of state from the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU). Shortly afterwards, Bashagha withdrew from the capital and declared his intention to run the affairs of state from Sirte. Since March 2022, two rival governments have laid claim to executive power in the North African country. From the perspective of the House of Representatives (HoR) based in Tobruk in eastern Libya, the mandate of Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbaiba and the GNU ended already in December 2021 with the failure of the presidential and parliamentary elections. As a result, the HoR appointed Fathi Bashagha as the new prime minister and swore in the GNS in March 2022. However, Dbaiba rejected the transfer of power from the GNU to Bashagha's cabinet, as had been demanded by parliament.

Myanmar

Freedom of expression

The military government has informed that between 27.01. and 05.05.22, a total of 229 people were arrested on charges of sedition and terrorism. The defendants are facing long prison sentences and the loss of homes and property. They had published social media posts in support of opposition groups classified as terrorist organisations by the military. These include the National Unity Government (NUG) in exile, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), which was ousted in the coup, and armed resistance groups (People's Defence Forces, PDF).

Security situation

Media report that between 04. and 18.05.22, at least 39 civilians, 16 members of PDFs and ethnic armies and around 160 Tatmadaw members were killed in clashes between the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) and anti-regime groups in Magway and Sagaing regions and Chin, Kayah, Kayin and Shan states. The number of victims among the Tatmadaw is mainly due to guerrilla attacks and could not be independently verified. Three people were killed and six others injured in attacks by pro- and anti-military groups in Yangon, Naypyidaw and Mandalay. Most civilian casualties occurred between 10.05 and 13.05.22 in the townships of Ye-U and Pale (Sagaing), where Tatmadaw forces shelled two villages and killed 33 people who had sought shelter in monasteries.

According to a report published on 10.05.22 by the think tank Institute for Strategy and Policy (ISP Myanmar), a total of 5,646 civilians have lost their lives since the military coup on 01.02.21 due to police and military violence, the armed conflict between Tatmadaw and resistance forces and revenge killings. At least 1,831 people were killed in gun battles, the majority of them in Sagaing, where resistance to the coup is strongest. 3,107 people were killed because they were considered dalans (informants to the military), the leader of the pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) stated. Besides, a growing number of revenge killings are attributed to pro-military militias such as the Thway Thauk, who are active in Mandalay. Since the end of April 2022, the Thauk have claimed responsibility for the murders of 18 people associated with the former ruling party National League for Democracy (NLD) and PDFs.

Nicaragua

Religious affiliation: surveillance of clergy, suspension of Catholic TV channel 51

In calendar week 20, police intensified surveillance and repression against religious leaders. According to media reports, at least three clergymen were affected, among them the Bishop of the Diocese of Matagalpa, Monsignor Rolando José Álvarez, who has repeatedly criticised the Ortega government and denounced human rights violations in the country. Since 19.05.22, he has reported intensified personal surveillance and police forces entering the homes of relatives. Also the church of the priest Harving Padilla in Masaya was surrounded by police. Since 15.05.22, he has reported harassment and surveillance by the police, but also by Sandinista parapolice groups.

On 20.05.22, the Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Posts (Telcor) ordered cable operators to take off the air the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference (CEN) channel 51, Canal Católico, which had broadcast messages of support for the bishop concerned.

Legal status of 44 more NGOs cancelled

In sessions held on 18.05. and 19.05.22, Nicaragua's Sandinista-dominated National Assembly voted in favour of shutting down 44 more NGOs. The interior ministry (Migob) accuses the NGOs of violations of the general law for the regulation and control of non-profit organisations (Ley N° 1115) and of Law 977 on combating money laundering, the financing of terrorism and the financing of the proliferation of mass destruction weapons.

Nigeria

Kidnapping on Nigeria's most dangerous highway

Media report that on 17.05.22, unidentified individuals blocked the highway between Abuja and the northern Nigerian metropolis of Kaduna and kidnapped dozens of passengers in order to extort a ransom. The busy road has been the scene of similar attacks in the past (cf. BN of 21.03.22). On 28.03.22, a train carrying hundreds of passengers was attacked on the railway line between the two cities with over a million inhabitants each (cf. BN of 04.04.22). Many of those abducted in this attack are reportedly still in the hands of the kidnappers.

Kidnapping crime in northern Nigeria: leader arrested

According to media reports of 19.05.22, Nigerian police have succeeded in arresting two suspected ringleaders of kidnap gangs allegedly responsible for the abduction of more than 130 students in Kaduna State in 2021. Some of the abductees at Greenfield University (cf. BN of 26.04.21) and Bethel Baptist High School (cf. BN of 12.07.21) did not survive their captivity, while others were reportedly released on payment of ransom. In the Greenfield University kidnapping case, the ransom demand apparently amounted to a total of NGN 800 million (approx. EUR 1.8 million, as of 23.05.22). According to UNICEF, around 1,500 pupils and students have been kidnapped from northern Nigerian educational institutions since December 2020. As the perpetrators are caught only in rare cases, the arrest of the two alleged leaders is considered a great success.

LGBTIQ people protest in the capital

On 01.05.22, according to consistent media reports, about 50 LGBTIQ people protested in Abuja against a proposed law that would allow people to be fined or imprisoned for wearing clothing typical of the opposite sex ("cross-dressing") in public or private. Online news reports feature photos of participants, some dressed in rainbow colours, and links to video footage posted on social media, including, for example, a video clip uploaded to Twitter on 01.05.22 apparently showing the protest action. In the video, a police officer on the back of a police pick-up observes the participants, some of whom are wearing T-shirts with LGBTIQ slogans, moving through a large area, dancing to music from loudspeakers, waving LGBTIQ-related flags and holding up banners. There is no information on consequences for the participants of the rally. NGOs have long been criticising Nigeria's anti-LGBTIQ legislation.

Pakistan

Peace talks between TTP and Pakistani government in Kabul

On 18.05.22, a spokesperson for the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) announced to extend the ceasefire with the Pakistani government until 30.05.22. Initial peace talks took place in Kabul under the mediation of the Afghan Taliban. They confirmed the TTP's statements on the talks and on the extension of the ceasefire. Encouraged by the Taliban's seizure of power in neighbouring Afghanistan, the TTP have carried out more attacks against Pakistani security forces in recent months.

Power cuts and water crisis due to heat in Sindh

Jacobabad in Pakistan's arid Sindh province has been badly affected by the current heat wave in South Asia. The canals in the city, which are used to irrigate the farms, have dried up. Water shortages and power outages further complicate life in the heat. Due to the lack of electricity, power is only available for six hours per day in rural areas and twelve hours in the city.

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan calls for protest march to Islamabad

On 25.05.22 former PM Imran Khan, who had been ousted in April 2022 after a no-confidence vote, called for a peaceful protest march to the capital Islamabad at a meeting with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party leaders in Peshawar. He described the march as an important step in upholding the country's sovereignty, claiming that his ouster was a plot organised by the US. Apparently, the plan is that the protesters remain in Islamabad until the recently reconstituted parliament is dissolved and new elections are called. Meanwhile, the arrest of former human rights minister Shireen Mazari, who is considered a close ally of Khan, was met with criticism.

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

East Jerusalem: Clashes after funeral march

The Palestinian Red Cross has informed that more than 70 Palestinians were injured during the funeral of a man who died of wounds suffered during clashes in April 2022 on the grounds of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Israeli military stated to have taken action against those who had thrown objects and fired fireworks at their forces, and that six military and police personnel were lightly wounded in the incident.

According to the military, the deceased had suffered fatal head injuries from a fall during his active participation in the April clashes. Both his family and people present at the incident have rejected these allegations and instead attributed the injuries to the use of rubber bullets.

West Bank: Minor militia member killed

The Palestinian health ministry has stated that on 21.05.22, an armed Palestinian minor was killed by the Israeli military in Jenin, in the north of the West Bank. According to the military, fire was opened from a passing vehicle and explosive devices were thrown at the military personnel as they tried to enter the town. The soldiers then opened fire. Another individual was seriously wounded and is presently in critical condition, according to the health ministry.

The militant organisation Islamic Jihad in Palestine later stated that the victim killed was one of their members.

Senegal

Police investigation into alleged homophobic group attack, situation of LGBTIQ people

According to media reports, Senegalese police have launched an investigation into attacks by a crowd on a male individual in the capital Dakar, allegedly committed for purely homophobic motives. On 17.05.22, several videos circulated on social media platforms showing a man suspected of homosexuality being maltreated by an angry crowd of an estimated 100 men. In one video, the crowd can be heard shouting "homosexuality is not accepted in Senegal". An eyewitness told Agence France-Presse (AFP) that local residents successfully intervened to save the badly battered man from the crowd after police had failed to intervene despite being called several times. Another video apparently shows an angry crowd outside a police station in the HLM district of the capital Dakar making

homophobic remarks and protesting. According to a local police officer who requested anonymity, the victim had stayed in the district before.

Members of the LGBTIQ community in Senegal complain that attacks on LGBTIQ people and discrimination have increased in recent years. Many are forced to live in hiding and are afraid of being discovered, others have fled the country.

Somalia

Deployment of US troops to Somalia

On 16.05.22, US President Joe Biden approved a Pentagon request to deploy a maximum of 500 forces to Somalia, reversing former President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw all US troops from Somalia in 2020. They are to counter al-Shabaab as part of the fight against terrorism.

South Sudan

Security situation

On 15.05. and 16.05.22, there was another assault on cattle herders in the Leer region of Unity State, leaving 28 people killed and 30 others injured. According to media reports, the attackers were youths from the Mayendit and Koch regions, both also located in Unity State.

In the disputed region of Abyei located between Sudan and South Sudan, fighting between members of ethnic Twic and Ngok Dinka has been going on for some time. Most recently, several people were killed, injured, and displaced in fighting on 16.05.22; there is no information on exact numbers. The conflicts mainly affect the Aneet and Rumamer regions. Due to the poor security situation, the radio station Abyei Information and Radio Service (AIRS) announced on 18.05.22 that it would cease broadcasting for the time being. AIRS has its broadcasting studios in the town of Agok (Rumamer region). Meanwhile, the transitional government of South Sudan has announced to send their own troops to Abyei to provide security, accusing the UN mission in Abyei of having failed to protect civilians and to contain the violence. The decision to send their own troops to the disputed region is viewed critically in some media reports, as this move might lead to a deterioration of relations with Sudan.

Sri Lanka

Further demonstrations, government reshuffle

Protests and demonstrations are continuing over shortages of food, fuel, and medicine. The demonstrators continue to demand the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. According to several reports, hundreds of students tried to enter the premises of the President's residence on 19.05.22. They were stopped by security forces using water cannons and tear gas.

The presidential office has informed that on 20.05.22, nine more cabinet members were sworn in, among them the ministers for health, trade, and tourism. Meanwhile, the new Prime Minister Wickremesinghe has warned of food shortages and promised that the government would strive to purchase enough fertiliser for the next planting season from September to March to increase crop yields. On 19.05.22, the country's central bank announced that it had secured foreign exchange for fuel and cooking gas to ease the shortage. The funds are reportedly made up of World Bank money and remittances from nationals living abroad, among other resources. Inflation is currently around 30 percent.

Sudan

Ongoing demonstrations

On 19.05.22, the Wad Madani resistance committees again called for protests which were violently dispersed by security forces, according to protesters. On 18.05.22, three people were shot dead, and five others were injured by security forces during protests in the Abu Nama region of Sennar State. In this case, the protests were not triggered

by resistance to the military coup, but by the uprising of local people against an agricultural company. On 21.05.22, a protester was shot dead by security forces during protests in Omdurman.

More activists arrested

On 12.05. and 16.05.22, numerous activists were arrested by security authorities. On 12.05.22 alone, 40 people were detained during protest rallies, as was reported by the organisation Sudan Emergency Lawyers. Contrary to an agreement to release them on bail, the protesters were apparently transferred to Soba prison. In White Nile State, resistance committees reported at least one arrest on 16.05.22. In El Gezira, eight people were reportedly detained and later released on bail.

Syria

First amnesty for terrorism crimes

On 30.04.22, on the occasion of the end of the fasting month, President Assad issued Decree No. 7, 2022, granting immunity from prosecution for terrorist crimes committed by Syrians before 30.04.22, except for those that led to the death of a human being.

This is the first amnesty decree since the beginning of the Syrian conflict referring to people accused of terrorism. Under the far-reaching anti-terror legislation, a broad concept of terrorism had been introduced in Syria, under which many (alleged) opponents of the government were arrested.

Following the decree of 30.04.22, several hundred inmates were reportedly released from prison. However, the names of those released were not made public. Neither did the Syrian authorities give comprehensive information on the number of people released: By way of example, it was announced on 05.05.22 that about 100 prisoners from Damascus and the surrounding area and about 40 from Daraa had been released. According to human rights organisations, more than 130,000 people have been arrested or are considered to have disappeared during the Syrian conflict.

In the weeks following the announcement of the decree, hundreds of people gathered daily at the Presidential Bridge, a central square in Damascus, to look for relatives who might be among those released.

Donors' conference in Brussels

At a new donors' conference in Brussels on 09. and 10.05.22, the international community donated a total of USD 6.7 billion. The money is designed to benefit both the Syrians who have remained in the country, but also Syrians who escaped to neighbouring countries. The UN target of 10.5 billion USD for 2022 was thus missed, as had also been the case in 2021.

Israeli air strike on Damascus

The Syrian defence ministry has informed that on 20.05.22, Israeli air strikes from the Golan Heights area killed three people and caused material damage. Shortly before, state television had reported that several missiles had been fired over the Damascus region.

No further details were given on casualties or property damage. The Israeli military, in line with its usual practice, has not commented on the accusations.

Tajikistan

Deaths in violent clashes in Gorno-Badakhshan

Up to 21 people have reportedly been killed in new violent clashes between protesters and security forces in the autonomous province of Gorno-Badakhshan. The May 2022 rallies escalated after a demonstrator was killed by a police officer on 16.05.22. The authorities stated that they subsequently conducted an anti-terror operation and reported more than 70 arrests. The protesters, in turn, accused the authorities of failing to investigate the death of an activist in police custody and to consider the resignation of both the regional governor and the mayor of the provincial capital of Khorog. The demands are related to the rallies and violent clashes at the end of November 2021, when the protesters demanded more autonomy for the province (cf. BN of 20.12.21 and 07.02.22).

Togo

Deadly assault on military post: details and consequences

Further details have come to light about the attack on the Kpékakandi military post near the border with Burkina Faso in the night from 10.05. to 11.05.22 (cf. BN of 16.05.22): Government representatives informed on 18.05.22 that not only eight members of the army were killed in the incident, but also 15 attackers. Togo's authorities consider the event to be the first deadly terrorist attack in their country. In response, the posts near the border have been reinforced, better armed and their technical equipment renewed. In addition, the region is to benefit from several economic and social projects.

Tunisia

Confrontations over plans for constitutional reform

According to media reports, the confrontation between the parties and the state president Kais Saied is intensifying after he excluded all parties from the "national dialogue" on the new constitution on 20.05.22. Saied appointed Sadeq Belaid, a law professor loyal to him, to head the "National Consultative Commission for a New Republic". Another advisory body is to be composed exclusively of members of trade unions, including the important UGTT union and a human rights organisation. On the same day, the UGTT declared to reject the form of dialogue proposed by the president. On 21.05.22, also the Ennahdha party stated that Saied's decree establishing a consultative body for the referendum was a "total deviation from constitutional legality".

Turkey

Protest against arrest of opposition politician

Thousands demonstrated in Istanbul on 21.05.22 against a prison sentence imposed on leading Turkish opposition politician Canan Kaftancıoglu. The rally was staged following the decision of the supreme court of appeal, which upheld a nearly five-year prison sentence for insulting the president and the state based on her Twitter posts from 2012 to 2017 (cf. BN of 16.05.22). Kaftancıoglu is the chairwoman of the Istanbul branch of the Republican People's Party (CHP). Media reports say that she was instrumental in the CHP's victory in the 2019 Istanbul municipal elections which ended the AKP's 25-year government in Istanbul.

Protesters arrested at LGBTIQ march

On 20.05.22, an LGBTIQ march was violently dispersed by local riot police at Bogazici University in Istanbul. Around 70 people were arrested in the incident. The event was organised by the LGBTIA+ Studies Club of Boğaziçi University (BÜLGBTİA+), which is no longer an official society having been dissolved by the university administration in 2021. When students waved rainbow flags and marched towards the former BÜLGBTİA+ premises, university security forces stormed the event. Riot police entered the university and violently dispersed the participants of the event.

Arrests in connection with Gülen movement

On 17.05.22, security forces arrested 35 suspects nationwide in separate operations against the Gülen movement. In the western province of Balıkesir, the public prosecutor's office issued arrest warrants for 31 suspects allegedly linked to the movement. So far, 29 of them have been arrested in the province as well as in Adana, Adiyaman, Ankara, Çanakkale, İstanbul, İzmir, Kastamonu, Kayseri, Kirikkale, Muğla, Muş, Sakarya, Samsun, Siirt and Van. Among those wanted were people who work or have worked in the public sector, including teaching staff, hospital staff and a non-commissioned officer.

In another operation in Ankara, eight individuals were arrested who are suspected to be members of a secret network of the movement in the gendarmerie.

In this context, the council of judges and prosecutors (HSK) announced on 17.05.22 that a total of 15 judges and prosecutors accused of membership in the terrorist group were permanently removed from their posts. Before, they had been suspended from duty pending the completion of the investigations.

Uganda

Oppositionist under house arrest

On 12.05.22, opposition leader Kizza Besigye (Forum for Democratic Change) was placed under house arrest. Reportedly, the police surveillance aims at preventing him from initiating and/or participating in a protest rally. Apparently, there have been plans of a demonstration against rising living costs and the announcement of a political strategic plan. Besigye has run as presidential candidate four times in the past, but he has not won an election.

Ukraine

Development of the situation in Ukraine

Russia continues to storm Severodonetsk and prepares an offensive against Slavyansk. Russian forces have entrenched themselves near Bakhmut. Meanwhile, rocket attacks are continuing on several Ukrainian cities. On 22.05.22 Russia attacked Kharkiv, Zaporozhye, Dnipropetrovsk and Zhytomyr oblasts. The Verkhovna Rada has extended martial law and mobilisation in Ukraine until 23.08.22. According to official statements by both sides, the negotiation process between Russia and Ukraine has come to a complete halt and is in fact not continuing at present. Last week, Ukrainian forces trapped in the Asovstal plant in Mariupol surrendered and left the steel plant's premises in groups and are now in Russian captivity; Russian authorities claim that their number is 2,439. According to information from the Ukrainian side, a prisoner exchange is planned, but there has been no confirmation from Russia side so far. Meanwhile, the Russian armed forces have started to build a system of trenches and concrete fortifications in the Kherson, Mykolaiv and Zaporizhzhya oblasts.

Vietnam

Montagnard activist sentenced to prison

It is reported that on 20.05.22, a court in Dak Lak province sentenced a Montagnard ethnic minority activist to four years imprisonment under Article 331 of the penal code (abuse of democratic freedoms). According to the authorities, the defendant had taken part in several online courses on topics including religious belief, Vietnamese civil law, international human rights, and the documentation of human rights violations; also, he was accused of having submitted three reports on human rights violations in Vietnam to "reactionary forces abroad". The activist had been arrested in September 2020.

Yemen

First flight from Sanaa since 2015

On 16.05.22 the first commercial flight took place from Sanaa to the Jordanian capital Amman. The flight had originally been planned for 24.04.22, but it could not take place because the internationally recognised government of Yemen refused permission to take off due to a dispute over the use of passports issued by Houthi authorities (cf. BN of 25.04.22). The agreement now provides that holders of those passports will be issued a new passport by the Yemeni government upon arrival in Amman. The resumption of commercial flights is part of the ceasefire agreement in force since 02.04.22 and provides for weekly connections to Amman/Jordan and Cairo/Egypt. The flight connection from Sanaa represents the first direct entry and exit possibility by air from the areas controlled by the Houthis since 2015.