



# Briefing Notes

Group 62 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

04 July 2022

## Afghanistan

### **Security situation: Report of the UN Secretary General**

According to the UN Secretary General's latest report on the situation in Afghanistan of 15.06.22, the security situation is continuously deteriorating. When the Taliban first took power on 15.08.21 conflict-related security incidents had initially decreased significantly, but during the reporting period the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) and resistance groups (12 groups are reportedly active in 18 provinces) fighting the Taliban, stepped up their attacks. Security forces responded with more preventive, albeit drastic, security measures, such as large-scale house searches and troop deployments. Nevertheless, the number of security incidents remains lower than in the same period last year. Only crime is said to remain consistently high (especially in Herat, Kandahar, Kabul and Nangarhar provinces). Moreover, there is no indication that the Taliban have taken steps to limit the activities of foreign terrorist fighters in the country. On the contrary, terrorist groups enjoy more freedom there than ever before.

### **Governance: Clerics assembly in Kabul**

For the first time, the Taliban held a large 3-day assembly (Loya Jirga) of about 3,000 loyal tribal elders and clerics (Ulema) from all over Afghanistan in Kabul, starting on 30.06.22. Women as well as members of opposition groups were not invited. The Taliban are said to have invited the clerics to the meeting at their own request to discuss important issues concerning the country. According to analysts, however, no agreement was reached on important issues, such as education for women. All attendees swore allegiance to Emir Akhunzada. In a closing statement, the participants demanded the recognition of the Taliban government by the international community and the release of foreign currency frozen abroad.

### **Persecution: Attacks against civilians**

According to the Afghan Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the Taliban tortured and/or killed civilians in Panjshir, Baghlan and Sar-e Pul provinces to obtain information about resistance groups. Human rights violations and killings of about 30-50 Hazaras were reported from Sar-e Pul province / Balkhab district. The Taliban denied the allegations.

## Burkina Faso

### **Transition phase shortened**

The mediator of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), former Nigerian President Mahamadou Issoufou, during his visit to Burkina Faso on 02.07.22 agreed a shorter transition phase until the reintroduction of constitutional order with the Burkinabe leadership. Whereas the junta had previously claimed a

period of 36 months for the return to constitutionality, it was now agreed to last 24 months, calculated from 01.07.22. The decision was adopted during an ECOWAS summit in Accra (Ghana) on 03.07.22.

### **Government: Ex-President Kaboré released**

According to a statement issued by the government on 03.07.22, the last restrictions on the freedom of ousted President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré have been lifted. Kaboré had been in the junta's custody since the January 2022 coup. He was allowed to return to his residence in Ougadougou as early as April 2022 but continued to be subject to unspecified restrictions on his freedom (cf. BN of 11.04.22).

## **China**

### **Hong Kong: New head of government sworn in**

As part of the celebrations for the 25th anniversary of the return of the former British Crown Colony to China, John Lee took the oath of office as the new Chief Executive of the Special Economic Zone on 01.07.22. In early May 2022, he had been elected by the Hong Kong electoral body to succeed the outgoing Carrie Lam (cf. BN of 09.05.22). Lee is a former Hong Kong security minister, as such he was largely responsible for the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement and helped implement the National Security Act.

## **Colombia**

### **Final report of the Truth Commission on decades of conflict**

On 28.06.22, the Truth Commission (Comisión de la Verdad), established in 2017 as part of the peace process with the guerrilla group FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), presented its final report on the armed conflict in Colombia. The members of the commission and 3,000 helpers interviewed more than 30,000 victims and perpetrators of the conflict, which lasted from 1958 to 2016. In its report the commission cites serious human rights violations such as displacement, sexual violence, torture, kidnapping, and extrajudicial executions, which affected around ten million people. According to the report, about 80 % of the victims were civilians and the number of those killed between 1986 and 2016 was about twice as high as previously assumed, at 450,000. In addition, 110,000 people are considered to have disappeared. The final report also includes recommendations to politicians, including a reorientation in drug policy, reform of the armed forces and consistent implementation of the peace agreement. During the report's presentation in Bogota, Francisco de Roux, chairman of the commission, called on still-active rebel groups, such as the ELN guerrillas, various FARC dissident groups and paramilitary groups, to lay down their arms. The final report was presented to President-elect Gustavo Petro, who described the report as a basis for peaceful coexistence in the future.

### **51 dead in prison riot**

On 28.06.22, a fire broke out during a prison riot in Tuluá in Valle del Cauca, killing 51 inmates and injuring 30. According to the head of the government's prison department, General Tito Castellanos, the fire started in a cell block with 180 inmates after some of the prisoners set fire to their mattresses. The country's 132 prisons, with a capacity for 81,000 people, are severely overcrowded with about 97,000 inmates, according to official figures.

## **DR Congo**

### **UN: Further deterioration of the situation relating to security, human rights and humanitarian needs in eastern Congo, EAC regional force**

The UN Special Representative and Head of the UN Stabilisation Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), Bintou Keita, informed the UN Security Council on 29.07.22 that the security situation in the eastern Congolese conflict provinces has further deteriorated. The ongoing activities of non-state armed groups threatened to undo the improvements achieved in security and stability in eastern Congo, he said. According to Keita, the resurgent rebel group Mouvement 23 (M23) gained better firepower and sophisticated equipment and is increasingly behaving like a conventional army rather than an armed group. The M23, an increasing threat to civilians, has killed several

civilians and displaced around 170,000 people in the Rutshuru and Nyiragongo territories of North Kivu province alone, he said. In response to the M23 rebellion, multinational and Congolese forces were deployed to the Petit Nord region (North Kivu), with far-reaching implications for the security, human rights and humanitarian situation in eastern Congo. Other non-state armed groups, including the Forces démocratiques alliées (ADF) and the ethnically oriented Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO), had taken advantage of the ensuing security vacuum to step up their attacks and reprisals in North Kivu and Ituri, he informed. In the period 28.05.22 to 17.06.22, more than 150 civilians were killed in these two provinces alone. Only recently, the UN Group of Experts on DR Congo reported that the security and humanitarian situation in North Kivu and Ituri has worsened since the state of siege came into force in May 2021. Keita also mentioned that against the backdrop of the ongoing regional tensions, there has been an increase in hate speech and calls for violence, mainly directed against Rwandophones and Rwandans. Recently, there have been several media reports of ethnically motivated violence and killings against Rwandan, Rwandophone and Tutsi people as well as Banyamulenge Tutsi or people suspected of being such, merely because of their physiognomy or language (cf. BN of 20.06. and 27.06.22).

In addition to the UN-mandated military operations and the joint military operations of the Congolese and Ugandan armed forces (cf. BN of 06.12.21), a further military offensive will begin in eastern Congo at the end of July 2022 with the deployment of an East African Community (EAC) intervention force with the aim of securing stability and peace. The regional force's size and the duration of its mission are not yet known. It is composed of forces from South Sudan, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and excludes the EAC member state Rwanda, and will be deployed in the two Kivu provinces and Ituri. There are some fears in civil society and opposition circles that the regional force could further exacerbate insecurity and instability. Some EAC member states are responsible for, or are accused of, having perpetrated direct or proxy attacks, serious human rights violations and destabilisation efforts in the DRC in the past. In addition to Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and, to some extent, South Sudan are confronted with non-state armed groups that maintain bases in eastern Congo, operate from there and, as a result, cause instability within those countries.

#### **ECiDé party member acquitted, lower court military verdict against Lucha member overturned**

According to UN Information Radio Okapi, the Buma Court of First Instance, in a verdict of 24.06.22, acquitted Luc Laembe, a member of the opposition party Engagement pour la Citoyenneté et le Développement (ECiDé) and spokesperson for the opposition LAMUKA platform in Ituri. Laembe had been imprisoned for more than six months and charged with "spreading false, disturbing rumours". The court ordered his release from prison. Furthermore, on 23.06.22, the military court of North Kivu, as a court of appeal, had annulled a first military sentence against twelve members of the civil society protest movement Lutte Pour Le Changement (LUCHA) on the grounds of lack of jurisdiction after the reinstatement of civilian criminal jurisdiction in the meantime (cf. BN of 13.06.22) and referred the case to a civilian court. The LUCHA members who protested the state of siege and were each sentenced to twelve months imprisonment in absentia for civil disobedience, among other things, in April 2022 (cf. BN of 04.04.22), were still in custody.

## **Ecuador**

#### **Agreement between government and indigenous umbrella organisation**

On 30.06.22, the government representative Francisco Jiménez and the president of the indigenous umbrella organisation CONAIE, Leonidas Iza, signed a joint declaration mediated by the Ecuadorian Bishops' Conference (Conferencia Episcopal Ecuatoriana - CEE). According to the declaration, the state of emergency will be ended, the price of fuel will be reduced by 15 US cents per gallon (3.78 litres) and two government decrees on the expansion of oil production in the Amazon region and on mining in protected areas will be revised. In addition, budgets for education and health are to be increased, fertiliser subsidised, and cheap loans offered to small farmers. In return, the - in some cases violent - protests held since 13.06.22 (cf. BN of 27.06.22), will be ended and roadblocks lifted.

## Egypt

### **Ten people sentenced to death and several hundred given prison terms**

According to media reports, on 28.06.22, a Cairo court sentenced ten people to death and at least 156 others to prison terms ranging from ten to 25 years in a mass trial. The charges included engaging in terrorist activities, killing members of the police force, damaging and destroying infrastructure in connection with the Helwan Brigades, which the authorities classify as a terrorist organisation. According to the Egyptian judiciary, the group is linked to a series of attacks on security forces between August 2013 and February 2015.

## Ethiopia / Sudan

### **Sudan blames Ethiopia for death of soldiers**

On 22.06.22, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and unspecified Ethiopian units clashed in the locality of Al Qureisha in the disputed Al-Fashaga region between Sudan and Ethiopia. Seven SAF members were initially reported missing. On 27.06.22, the Sudanese government accused the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) of killing the soldiers and one civilian. The Ethiopian government and the ENDF denied the allegation, saying that the ENDF was not present in the area, blaming the crime on local militias. Sudanese media reported that the SAF attacked ENDF positions, retook areas and captured dozens of Ethiopian soldiers. Sudan also recalled its ambassador from Ethiopia and lodged a complaint with the UN Security Council.

This fertile region has seen an increasing number of armed clashes between the two countries since November 2020, when Sudan claimed the land for itself, citing colonial-era treaties, and ordered Ethiopian farmers who have been living there for decades to leave. Talks have so far failed to produce an agreement (cf. BN of 29.11.21, 08.02.21 and 11.01.21).

## Ghana

### **Protests**

On 28.06.22 and 29.06.22 protests organised by the Arise Ghana movement took place in Accra in response to the high cost of living. The demonstration on 28.06.22 escalated, 15 police officers were injured. The police used tear gas and arrested 29 people. They were granted release on bail; at least 26 of them were subsequently released. All of them were due to appear in court on 04.07.22. There were no incidents during the protests of 29.06.22. The protests were directed against, among other things, rising fuel prices and the taxation of electronic money transfers (E-Levy) introduced in May 2022. Inflation in May 2022 was 27.6% higher than in the same month last year.

## Guinea-Bissau

### **Embaló elected ECOWAS chairperson**

At the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Accra, Ghana, on 03.07.22, President Umaro Sissoco Embaló was elected as the new Chairman. He replaces his Ghanaian counterpart Nana Akufo-Addo after two terms in office. The election of the rotating ECOWAS presidency is initially valid for one year; Guinea-Bissau thus also takes over the presidency at meetings at ministerial level. This is the first time since the founding of ECOWAS in 1975 that one of the two Portuguese-speaking member states (besides Cabo Verde) has held this position. In a press release from the Guinea-Bissau presidential office, Embaló explained that he has thus "in his hands the dossiers on the political crisis in the sub-region, especially in Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea-Conakry, but also security challenges, such as the wave of terrorism".

In Guinea-Bissau itself, an ECOWAS stabilisation mission is ongoing (cf. BN of 27.06.22), and the parliament was dissolved following a political crisis until new elections will be held on 18.12.22 (cf. BN of 23.05.22). Currently, a judgement by the Criminal Division of the Supreme Court is also giving rise to criticism. The Court acquitted two alleged leading drug traffickers convicted by a lower court of being responsible for smuggling over 1,800 kg of cocaine. The cocaine had been seized in September 2019. According to a media report, a civil society group held the view that the Supreme Court was held hostage by organised crime.

## India

### **Reactions after protests over Islamophobic remarks.**

On 01.07.22, the Supreme Court of India commented on remarks made by the now suspended spokesperson of the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which Muslims found offensive (cf. BN of 13.06.22). The Supreme Court holds her responsible for the subsequent nationwide protests and demands a public apology. According to media reports, authorities demolished houses belonging to members of the Muslim faith after the protests, allegedly as collective punishment. Furthermore, a journalist critical of the government was arrested in New Delhi for drawing attention to the remarks on his website and social media.

### **Hindu murdered**

On 28.06.22, two Muslims killed a Hindu tailor in his shop in Udaipur in the north-western state of Rajasthan. The suspects' justification for the crime was that the victim had spread the BJP spokesperson's Islamophobic remarks online. The attack by the perpetrators armed with knives was allegedly recorded and shared on social media. Television media also aired this video, although its veracity could not be confirmed.

## Iran

### **Executions in Raja'i Shahr Prison**

Ten prisoners were executed in Raja'i Shahr prison in Karaj (Alborz province, northern Iran) on 29.06.22, as reported by foreign media with reference to the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA). Eight of the executed prisoners were convicted of murder. Two others were executed for rape and alleged forced homosexual intercourse (Persian *levat be'onf*). According to media reports, the number of executions in Iran had increased noticeably in recent months. Since the beginning of the Iranian month of Khordad (22.05.22) alone, 97 prisoners are said to have been executed in Iranian prisons. Most of the executions were for murder and drug offences. However, foreign media see a link between recent protests and the growing number of executions. The authorities and rulers of the Islamic Republic want to create an atmosphere of intimidation by cracking down. At a meeting with representatives of the judiciary, the revolutionary leader recently called for a repetition of the executions of political prisoners as in the early days of the Islamic revolution.

### **Appeals court upholds prison sentence of online editor and activist**

Iranian foreign media, citing the statements made by the literary editor and social media activist concerned, report that his prison sentence was upheld by an appeals court on 30.06.22. The man had been sentenced to six years in prison on 12.09.21 on charges of insulting sacred principles and the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic. The sentence now passed stipulates that he must serve three and a half years of the sentence, the reports say.

### **Conviction of an online journalist**

According to media reports, on 29.06.22, an online journalist announced via her social media channel that she had been sentenced to five years in prison. Two years of the sentence had been suspended. According to the statement, she had been charged with inciting violence, assembly and collusion against national security, and propaganda against the system, among other charges. In addition, she was banned from expressing herself on social media, it was said. The woman had been arrested by security forces already in November 2020 and released on bail in December 2020.

### **Social policy: Increased measures to curb Western lifestyle**

Foreign media report a noticeable increase in measures against the Western lifestyle in the country. For example, police reported on 24.06.22 in Amlash district (Gilan province) that they had arrested 22 tourists in the local hills. The domestic tourists are accused of missionary activities to spread new western-style esoteric sects. The group had also consumed narcotics and practised occultism, the police said. Already on 19.06.22, the authorities had arrested a group of 120 domestic tourists in the northern province of Mazandaran. They are accused of putting up satanic banners, drinking alcohol, taking off the hijab, dancing of men and women together etc.

In the city of Shiraz, the authorities closed 20 cafés within a short period of time. The staff, mostly students financing their studies by working in the cafés, were dismissed. Pressure is also mounting on numerous local hairdressing salons for women. In addition, there are increasing reports of arrests and threatened confiscation of cars via text message for disobeying the hijab regulations.

## **Iraq**

### **Fatalities in fighting between two tribes in Basra**

On 02.07.22, members of the Al-Bu Hamdan and Al-Batut clans fought for several hours in the province of Basra (city of Garma). This was preceded by a dispute over unsettled debts that lasted for years and gradually escalated. Videos circulating on the internet also suggest the use of heavy weapons systems. Many of the security forces used drones and armoured vehicles to calm the situation. At least five people died and another 21 were injured.

### **Murder at wedding/debate over gun control in KRI**

On 01.07.22, a double murder of a bride (18) and groom (21) occurred in Erbil province. The bride's 21-year-old brother shot his sister and her husband despite a family agreement. After the relationship became known, the woman had been abused by her family and attempted suicide. An agreement was then reached between the two families. It stipulated that three women from the groom's family - his 20 and 13 year old sisters and an unmarried aunt - would be given as brides to the bride's brothers as compensation for the loss of honour and consent to the marriage. However, several uncles and the alleged perpetrator did not agree to the arrangement. The crime reignited the ongoing debate on gun control in the KRI and led to a short-term ban on the sale of firearms in Erbil governorate, as well as the announcement of a campaign against illegal gun possession.

## **Lebanon**

### **Economic situation**

On 02.07.22, it was announced that Qatar will continue to financially support Lebanon's armed forces and has donated USD 60 million to sustain them. Since June 2021, Qatar has already donated approximately 70 tonnes of food per month to the Lebanese Armed Forces, whose stability is considered essential for Lebanese unity.

On 01.07.22, various telecommunication tariffs were changed. Although prices in dollars were largely reduced, the rates were considerably increased in fact, as payment in Lebanese pounds at the theoretical exchange rate of 1:1500, is no longer possible, but instead at a flexible exchange rate, the Sayrafa rate, which currently stands at 1:25,000.

## **Libya**

### **Demonstrations against political stalemate and social grievances**

According to media reports, hundreds of people protested in several Libyan cities, including Tripoli, Tobruk, Misrata and Benghazi, against deteriorating living conditions and political gridlock, on 01.07.22. For several years the country has been experiencing prolonged power cuts, fuel shortages and, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic and the start of the Ukraine war, rising food prices. In the eastern Libyan city of Tobruk, demonstrators pelted the parliament with stones, lit fires and gained access to the empty parliament building. They demanded the dissolution of parliament and new elections. Since March 2022, two rival governments, Government of National Stability (GNS) led by Fathi Bashagha and Government of National Unity (GNU) led by Abdul Hamid Dbaiba, have claimed executive power in Libya. On 28.06.22, the two sides met for UN-organised talks in Geneva to negotiate the constitutional framework for new elections. Although, according to the UN, progress was made, the parties to the conflict failed to reach a final agreement; the eligibility criteria for potential presidential candidates are particularly disputed.

## **Mali**

### **Lifting of sanctions**

On 03.07.22, the West African Economic Community (ECOWAS) announced that the economic and financial sanctions imposed on Mali in January 2022 would be lifted immediately. The Malian transitional government had proposed a new timetable for elections and published a new electoral law, according to which parliamentary elections are to be held in November 2023 and presidential elections in February 2024. Also, a new constitution shall be drafted. Heavy sanctions were imposed on Mali on 09.01.22 after the military government wanted to postpone the elections - originally planned for the beginning of 2022 - by five years (cf. BN of 10.01.22). However, Mali remains suspended from ECOWAS.

## **Montenegro**

### **Litigation over flaws in the implementation of the equality law for same-sex couples**

The Podgorica-based NGO LGBT Forum Progress filed a lawsuit against the State of Montenegro in a local lower court on 08.06.22. The organisation accuses the authorities of failing to adapt the existing legal framework to the new law legalising same-sex partnerships. This discriminates Montenegrin citizens who have married abroad but are unable to register their partnership at home, although they would be entitled to do so according to the law. The law, which was passed in July 2020, puts same-sex partnerships on an almost equal footing with marriage between a man and a woman. Among other things, it regulates the mutual financial support of partners and the division of joint property in the event of separation. On 26.07.21, the first same-sex partnership was registered in the coastal town of Budva (cf. BN of 09.08.21).

## **Morocco**

### **Demonstrations in front of Rabat UNHCR office**

On 28.06.22, about 50 people demonstrated in front of the UNHCR building in Rabat against the Moroccan border police's harsh response when the border fence to Melilla was stormed by about 2,000 migrants. According to official sources, 23 people were killed on the Moroccan side of the fence, while a representative of the migrants reported more than 70 deaths. It is said that over 500 people managed to flee to Spain. During the assault on the border fence, many of the migrants were armed with clubs, knives, and acid. Most of the refugees currently in Morocco are from Sudan.

## **Nigeria**

### **Edo State: Catholic priests abducted and killed**

According to media reports, unknown persons abducted and then killed a Roman Catholic priest from his home in the village of Ikabigbo in the southern Nigerian state of Edo on 26.06.22. His body was found the same day. Reports say that the police arrested several suspects on 29.06.22.

On 02.07.22, another two Catholic priests were abducted in the same state while travelling on the road between the towns of Benin City and Ekpoma. In the northern state of Kaduna, two Catholic priests have been killed in recent times, most recently on 25.06.22. In June 2022, an Anglican bishop had been abducted and released two days later in the south-western state of Oyo.

### **Six death sentences in two states**

According to consistent media reports, a Sharia court in the predominantly Muslim state of Bauchi sentenced three men to death by stoning for homosexual acts on 29.06.22. According to some media, the convicts are accused of homosexual acts against minors. The three men had pleaded guilty and could appeal the sentence within a month. Bauchi is one of the states in northern Nigeria where Sharia law was reintroduced between 1999 and 2001.

On 30.06.22, a secular court in Plateau State sentenced three men to death by hanging or lethal injection. They are accused of stabbing a man to death during an argument on Christmas 2015, according to reports. The lawyer of the convicts has already announced that he will appeal.

Death sentences are rarely carried out in Nigeria. Instead, those sentenced to death are usually imprisoned indefinitely. Anyone sentenced to death will only be executed, when the death penalty imposed is approved by the governor of the respective state, according to media reports.

### **Niger State: Foreign miners kidnapped**

On 29.06.22, unknown armed assailants killed several people and abducted at least four Chinese miners during an attack on a mine in Niger State. According to media reports, Nigerian authorities launched a search and rescue operation. In recent years, the number of Chinese nationals working in Nigeria's mining, construction and agricultural sectors have increased. Niger is one of the states where abductions have become more frequent recently.

## **Palestinian Territories / Israel**

### **Hamas announces deterioration in health of Israeli prisoner**

On 28.06.22, the radical Islamic Hamas group in the Gaza Strip released a video purporting to show an Israeli national lying in a hospital bed. The video was released a day after the organisation said that the health of a detained Israeli had deteriorated severely. According to official statements by the Israeli authorities, as well as several human rights organisations, the detainee is suffering from a mental illness. He was arrested by the group when he crossed the border into the Gaza Strip in 2015 and has been held in an unknown location ever since.

### **West Bank: Two killed in clashes**

On 29.06.22, the Israeli military shot and killed a Palestinian during an arrest raid. The Islamist group Islamic Jihad in Palestine announced that he had been one of its fighters. According to the Israeli military, explosive devices were thrown at them while two people were being arrested, to which the military responded with live ammunition. In another incident, a Palestinian suspected of using incendiary devices to attack military personnel on a routine mission near the village of Jaba on 02.07.22 died the following day from gunshot wounds inflicted by the military. The military announced an investigation into the incident.

### **West Bank: Escalation of violence near religious site**

According to the Israeli military, on 30.06.22, armed Palestinians attacked hundreds of Jewish visitors to Joseph's Tomb in the West Bank. One military personnel and two civilians were wounded.

In turn, the Palestinian news agency Wafa reported one wounded Palestinian minor and 16 others injured by rubber bullets.

## **Pakistan**

### **Attack on vaccination team in North Waziristan**

On 28.06.22, a member of a polio vaccination team and two security personnel were killed by unknown persons in the Datta Khel area of North Waziristan tribal district, which is part of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, bordering Afghanistan.

## **Republic of Congo**

### **NGOs criticise systematic torture practices**

According to a media report, the Congolese Observatory for Human Rights (OCDH) documented some 43 cases of torture, including nine cases resulting in death, between January 2020 and June 2022. According to several human rights organisations (not named), torture practices are systematically used in Congo in a climate of widespread impunity. The NGOs called on the authorities/government to consistently prosecute perpetrators according to

criminal law and to include a separate offence of torture (constitutionally prohibited) in the penal code. The report also says that no payment of damages in the amount stated in the judgement had been made to date in a torture case from January 2022, which led to the conviction of several police officers for bodily harm in February 2022 and a sentence of ten year's imprisonment without probation (cf. BN of 14.02.22), as well as an obligation for the Congolese state to pay damages. OCDH called for the rigorous enforcement of penalties to have a deterrent effect. There are repeated reports of the use of torture and ill-treatment practices by state agents (cf. BN of 14.02.22 and 28.02.22).

## **Senegal**

### **Ban on demonstrations, release of opposition politicians**

The Senegalese administrative authorities have once again banned demonstrations planned by the opposition coalition Yewwi Askan Wi (YAW) for 29.06.22. As a result, YAW leaders announced the postponement of the planned marches. In a press release issued on 28.06.22, Amnesty International warns of a real threat to the right to demonstrate in Senegal. The organisation calls on the authorities to guarantee the constitutional right to peaceful assembly and denounced arbitrary arrests. Several opposition leaders who had been arrested for disobeying the ban on demonstrations (cf. BN of 27.06.22), including MPs Déthié Fall and Mame Diarra Fame as well as the mayor of Guédiawaye, Ahmed Aidara, were released on 27.06.22. The Dakar High Court sentenced Déthié Fall to six months suspended imprisonment and a fine of 100,00 CFA (approx. EUR 152). Mame Diarra Fame, as well as 82 co-defendants, were released due to "insufficiently established facts". Ahmed Aidara was sentenced to a one month suspended prison term by the court in Pikine.

## **Somalia**

### **Attacks**

On 27.06.22, a vehicle carrying media workers, military officials and the governor of the region was damaged by the explosion of a landmine in Qabno (Hiraan region). Three soldiers were killed and two journalists seriously injured. At the time of the attack, media professionals were reporting on a military campaign against al-Shabaab. The following day, the Somali National Army deployed additional troops to the region to support ongoing operations against al-Shabaab as well as to secure and demine the connecting roads.

Another landmine explosion targeting African Union forces killed at least five Ugandan soldiers and injured several on the outskirts of Marka (Lower Shabelle region) on 02.07.22, according to local media reports. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack.

## **South Sudan**

### **Difficult humanitarian and supply situation**

After the World Food Programme (WFP) announced in June 2022 that due to lack of support, aid destined for South Sudan had to be reduced (cf. BN of 20.06.22) before being stopped altogether, nationwide food aid was stopped altogether for some of the people in need a week ago. According to the UN, support for a total of 6.2 million people in South Sudan was planned for 2022. Now food aid has been completely stopped for 1.7 million people.

In the past three days, three people have already died in a camp for internally displaced people in Warrap state because of the lack of food. The WFP did not receive sufficient funds to provide the food required, including because of the global focus on the war in Ukraine and the current price increases.

## **Sudan**

### **Ongoing protests**

According to the Central Council of Sudanese Doctors, one protester was killed when security forces used live ammunition during demonstrations in Khartoum on 29.06.22.

On 30.06.22, the previously announced nationwide "March of Millions" took place. According to reports, rallies were held in at least 26 cities across the country. In some cities, the protests and sit-ins continued until 03.07.22. According to further reports, the interim military government disabled internet and telephone services from 08:00 on 30.06.22 to disrupt the organisation of the protests previously announced. On 01.07.22, all services were available again. In addition, important bridges between the sister cities of Khartoum and Omdurman and between Omdurman and Bahri had been closed by security forces. Nevertheless, reports, pictures and videos of the demonstrations reached various platforms and news services. Even broadcasters such as Al-Jazeera, which had previously been banned from operating by the interim military government, reported live on some of the events. Nine people were killed and up to 500 others injured because of the harsh intervention by the security forces. According to official figures, 96 police and 129 army personnel were injured. In addition to live ammunition, the security forces also used water cannons and tear gas. According to the doctors treating the victims, many of them suffered gunshot wounds. In addition, some security forces tried to storm the hospitals where protesters were being treated. According to the Emergency Lawyers Association, there have been mass arrests, with 139 and 70 people arrested in the towns of Port Sudan and Hasaheisa alone. They are currently not allowed to receive visits of relatives and to be represented by lawyers. Since the military coup in October 2021, 114 people have been killed by security forces during protests.

## Syria

### **New UN estimates: More than 300,000 civilians killed since 2011**

A position paper published on 28.06.22 by the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria, cited new casualty figures for the Syrian conflict, which has been ongoing for more than ten years. Accordingly, between 01.03.2011 and 31.03.2021, a total of 306,887 cases of civilians killed during the fighting were recorded. This corresponds to about 1.5% of the pre-war population.

Combatants and deaths that were not reported to the authorities are not included in this list. In 143,350 cases, precise information on the name, place and date of death could be provided.

### **Afrin: Nine killed by missiles fired from government areas**

According to the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, nine militiamen were killed in Turkish-occupied Afrin on 29.06.22 when a Syrian army missile reportedly hit a transport vehicle. The victims belonged to the Failaq al-Sham group, an Islamist Syrian Arab militia that sides with the Turkish military.

### **Idlib: High-ranking member of Hurras al-Din killed by US drones**

According to a US military statement, Abu Hamzah al-Yemeni, a senior Yemeni member of the al-Qaeda-affiliated Hurras al-Din, was targeted and killed in a drone strike on 27.06.22. According to the Syrian Civil Defence, also known as the White Helmets, the air strike occurred south of Idlib (city). There are no reports of wounded people involved. According to various sources, the man killed was alone on a motorbike at the time of the attack.

### **Tartus: Air strike wounds civilians**

According to the Syrian Ministry of Defence, the Israeli military fired several missiles at targets in the village of al-Hamidiyah in the south of the governorate of Tartus on 02.07.22. According to the report, two civilians were also wounded by the air strikes.

## Turkey

### **Deutsche Welle online service blocked**

The Turkish authority responsible for media control, RTÜK, blocked the website of the German foreign broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW) on 01.07.22 due to licensing problems. The website of the US broadcaster Voice of America was also blocked. Already in February RTÜK had required DW and other international media to apply for broadcasting licences in accordance with Turkey's 2019 media law.

DW said it had not complied because licensing would have allowed censorship of editorial content by the Turkish government, which is unacceptable for an independent media provider. DW will take legal action against the blocking.

### **Pride parade prisoners released**

According to media reports, Turkish police have released almost all activists arrested during the banned Pride parade in Istanbul (see BN 27.06.22). Many of them were released after only one night in custody.

### **Release of military students**

According to media reports, 71 former students of the Military Academy who had been sentenced to life imprisonment for involvement in the 2016 coup attempt were released following a ruling by the Court of Cassation on 21.06.22. A total of 355 military students had been arrested after the coup attempt, the report said, and 122 defendants had stood trial. Furthermore, the court had overturned the convictions of 116 Air Force Academy cadets and ordered their release in 71 cases. The other appeals are still pending. The report said that in its opinion the Supreme Court of Appeal had found that the cadets had been unaware of the plans for a coup attempt on the night of 15.07.16 and had not participated in any acts of the coup plotters.

### **Arrests on terrorism charges**

On 27.06.22, Turkish police arrested 36 people on terrorism charges, according to media reports. Among them were officials of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), such as the deputy chairpersons of the HDP office in the central province of Adana, Helin Kaya and Mehmet Karakış, as well as the deputy mayor of the city of Seyhan in Funda Buyruk province.

The arrests followed the issuing of arrest warrants for a total of 38 people suspected of links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Already on 24.06.22, 17 lawyers were arrested in operations that took place simultaneously in the provinces of Istanbul, Ankara, and Bursa, at the same time their computers, mobile phones and documents were confiscated. The Istanbul Prosecutor General's Office had previously ordered the detention of 20 lawyers, accusing them of links to the Gülen movement based, in particular, on recordings of calls from payphones.

### **ECtHR ruling on pre-trial detention of members of the Turkish judiciary**

On 28.06.22, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that there had not been sufficient grounds to warrant reasonable suspicions for the pre-trial detention of 50 judges and prosecutors following the failed coup attempt in Turkey in 2016 and ordered Turkey to pay €5,000 in damages for each case for violating the European Convention on Human Rights. The members of the judiciary had been arrested as part of a mass raid against the Gülen movement and had denied any involvement.

## **Uganda**

### **Opposition figure released from prison**

Kizza Besigye was released on bail for the equivalent of USD 665 after two weeks in prison (see BN 20.06.22). On 29.07.22 he must stand trial for inciting violence.

## **Ukraine**

### **Heavy fighting in Donbass, Ukrainian withdrawal from Lysychansk**

Attacks by Russian forces in the Donbass and other contested areas of Ukraine continue to massively affect civilians. A Russian missile attack on a shopping centre in the city of Kremenchuk in Poltava Oblast killed at least 19 people and injured 66 others on 27.06.22, according to authorities. Air strikes on residential areas in the Odessa region killed at least 21 people on 01.07.22, according to media reports. In the eastern Ukrainian city of Slovyansk, six people were reported killed and 15 injured after a missile attack on 03.07.22, according to local authorities. Meanwhile, Ukrainian forces announced their withdrawal from the heavily contested city of Lysychansk in the Luhansk region. On 03.07.22, Russian news agencies reported the occupation of the entire Luhansk region. The

Russian side holds the view that this is the territory of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic, which is recognised by Russia. According to media reports, an authority for issuing Russian passports has been set up in the city of Luhansk, and residents of the region are no longer required to travel to the Russian Federation to obtain Russian citizenship. There are also reports that Russian citizenship can be applied for with the de facto administrative authorities installed there by Russia in the Russian-occupied regions Zaporizhzhya and Kherson. According to the Ukrainian General Staff, Russian forces continue to advance towards the cities of Slavyansk and Kramatorsk in Donetsk Oblast following military gains in Luhansk Oblast. On the southern front line in the Kherson region occupied by Russian forces, Ukraine is preparing a counter-offensive, according to media reports. A request by the Russian President's press spokesman to Ukraine on 03.07.22 to resume peace negotiations and accept Russian peace terms was rejected the same day by a representative of the Ukrainian Presidential Office.

## **United States of America**

### **Migrant deaths in Texas**

On 28.06.22, 46 people were found dead in a lorry on the outskirts of the city of San Antonio in the US state of Texas, and 16 people, some of them severely dehydrated, were taken to hospital. In the meantime, the death toll has risen to 53. According to the head of the Mexican migration authority, Francisco Garduño, at least 27 people from Mexico, 14 from Honduras, seven from Guatemala and two from El Salvador were among the fatalities. In addition, the migration authority announced that three suspects had been arrested. According to police, a city employee was alerted by cries for help from the vehicle and discovered the migrants, who are suspected of having been smuggled from Mexico to the United States.

## **Yemen**

### **Humanitarian situation**

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) announced on 26.06.22 that it was forced to reduce food rations in Yemen even further. Approximately five million people will now receive less than 50% of the recommended daily food intake, and a further eight million people will now receive only 25% of the daily recommended ration. The reasons given by the WFP include the effects of the war in Ukraine and a lack of funding. Already in January 2022, the WFP had to reduce food rations in Yemen due to insufficient funding (see BN 03.01.22).

### **Bomb attack in Aden**

On 29.06.22, the convoy of a high-ranking military commander of the secessionist Southern Transitional Council (STC) was attacked by a bomb in the southern Yemeni city of Aden. Six people were killed. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack, but according to authorities, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has recently been carrying out more attacks in areas under the control of the anti-Houthi coalition (see BN 27.06.22).

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