



Briefing Notes

Group 62 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Food price increase

According to a report by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) dated 13.07.22, food prices in Afghanistan have been rising sharply since the Taliban took power. Since June 2021, the cost of cooking oil has increased by 55%, wheat flour by up to 68%, fertiliser by 107%, and fuel by 93%. The increases are partly due to the fact that 60% of the world's sunflower oil is produced in Ukraine and Russia, where the ongoing war has adversely affects exports. Kazakhstan, the main exporter of wheat to Afghanistan, has recently imposed export restrictions because of the conflict in Ukraine. Other negative factors in Afghanistan itself, are the ongoing drought and, as a result of the economic crisis, high unemployment and impoverishment of society. In the report, a shopkeeper describes how customers used to spend the equivalent of USD 225 per month on basic foodstuffs, but now only have USD 56 to spend.

Cholera outbreaks in southern and central Afghanistan

Many people have been infected with cholera in Helmand, Daikundi, and Zabul provinces. In Baghran district of Helmand province, about 500 people have been infected and 20 of them have died. In Daikundi province, about eleven people have died and in Sivari district of Zabul province, about 50 children have been infected. The fact that only about 30 % of the people in Zabul have access to clean drinking water might well be a reason for the outbreak. The spokesperson for the Taliban's Ministry of Health had earlier told the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) that about 52,000 people have been infected with cholera across Afghanistan since the beginning of this year and the death toll is in the dozens by now.

Afghanistan ranks at the bottom of the Gender Gap Index

The Global Gender Gap Index for 2022 was presented at the World Economic Forum on 13.07.22 and Afghanistan ranked last out of 146 countries. The index measures gender parity in four key areas: economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political participation.

Bangladesh

Hindu community building vandalised

On 15.07.22, several persons vandalised a Hindu temple, a grocery shop and several residential buildings belonging to members of the Hindu community in the south-western district of Narail (Kulna Division). The violence was reportedly triggered by a Facebook post by a Hindu which allegedly hurt the religious feelings of faithful Muslims. This is reportedly the second attack on Hindus in the area within a month.

Brazil

Killing of a party official

On 09.07.22, the party official of the opposition Workers' Party (PT), Marcelo Arruda, was shot dead by a sympathiser of President Jair Bolsonaro in the southern Brazilian city of Foz do Iguaçu. During Arruda's birthday party, which also served as an election event for presidential candidate Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, he got into an argument with the attacker, who was previously unknown to him. The latter then shot Arruda yelling "Here comes Bolsonaro!" and "Lula is a thief!". Reportedly, Arruda was also armed and shot back. The attacker, who is now under investigation for hate crimes with political motivation, was taken to hospital seriously injured. Brazil's presidential election will be held on 02.10.22.

China

Hong Kong: Convictions for joining and preparing pro-democracy protests

On 13.07.22, a Hong Kong court sentenced 66-year-old democracy activist Alexandra Wong (known as "Grandma Wong") to eight months in prison. The prosecution accused Wong of attending two illegal meetings on 11.08.19, shouting offensive words and encouraging illegal meetings by waving the Union Jack and holding up slogans such as "release all political prisoners immediately". Wong had already been sentenced to prison twice for obstructing security forces and assaulting a Supreme Court guard. She said that in 2019 and 2020, she had been detained for almost 14 months, interrogated and forced to make confessions in mainland China.

On 12.07.22, Koo Sze-yiu, a 75-year-old democracy activist terminally ill with cancer, was sentenced to nine months in prison for attempted sedition. He had prepared a protest against the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics to be held in front of the China Liaison Office in Hong Kong, which was thwarted by the police.

Colombia

Armed forces kill FARC dissident Mordisco

On 15.07.22, Defence Minister Molano announced that Nestor Gregorio Vera, alias Ivan Mordisco, who commanded the south-eastern bloc of FARC dissidents, had been killed in a bomb attack followed by a ground offensive. According to Molano, Mordisco was killed along with nine other fighters in a jungle area in the south-western province of Caqueta. He confirmed that the aim of the operation had been to "neutralise one of the top FARC dissident commanders who had never joined the Havana peace agreement" and that Mordisco had been "the last major FARC leader". According to security sources, Mordisco replaced Gentil Duarte as leader of the FARC dissident faction after the latter was killed in the Venezuelan state of Zulia on 04.05.22 (see BN of 13.06.22).

DR Congo

UN Annual Report: High number of child-specific human rights violations

According to the UN report of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), published on 11.07.22, the DRC is among the states in which the most serious human rights violations against children were recorded in the reporting year 2021, including killings, recruitment and use in armed conflicts, abduction, sexual and gender-based violence. Mostly non-state armed groups were responsible for the violations, which occurred mainly in the provinces of North Kivu, Ituri, South Kivu, Maniema, and Tanganyika, the report said. UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed concern about the high number of serious child-specific human rights violations. He said the growing number of such violations by government forces, including the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals, particularly in North Kivu and Ituri, was also very alarming. Guterres called on the government to release children detained for alleged links to armed groups and to treat them in line with the 2013 government guidelines and international principles of juvenile justice. He also said the government must make greater efforts to combat and prevent sexual violence against children. He said that the armed forces are responsible for a persistently high number of such cases.

The Gambia

NHRC: Fight against human trafficking

According to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), combating trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation remains a challenge at home and abroad. One factor is the trafficking victims' unwillingness to take legal action, mainly for fear of stigmatisation. Another problem is the extremely long duration of criminal trials and that there is only one government shelter, which is not only open to victims of human trafficking. The National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) said that it had made efforts to stop trafficking in 2021 and provided training to members of the police, intelligence and immigration services. The NHRC urged the government, firstly, to provide the NAATIP with sufficient technical and financial resources to effectively fulfill its duties and use its powers, and secondly, to effectively enforce regulations to prosecute traffickers. Since 2021, several cases of investigation and prosecution as well as some convictions for trafficking in human beings have become known (cf. BN of 02.05.22, 08.11.21 and 09.08.21).

Death sentences against NIA agents, concern about transitional justice

After years of trial hearings, the Banjul High Court on 13.07.22 found five former members of the domestic intelligence service (SIS, formerly NIA) guilty of the murder of Ebrima Solo Sandeng, the youth leader of the opposition United Democratic Party (UDP), in 2016 and sentenced them to death; two other defendants were acquitted. Among those convicted were former the director of the agency, Yankumba Badjie, and the former officer-in-charge Sheikh Omar Jeng. Sandeng, who in April 2016 headed a rally calling for electoral reforms ahead of the December 2016 presidential election and was arrested by NIA operatives along with other UDP members, had died of torture and ill-treatment in NIA administrative detention two days later. The criminal trial, which began in 2017, is the only domestic criminal trial related to crimes committed under the previous government of Yahya Jammeh, except for a death sentence (for a murder offence) against ex-minister Yankuba (see BN of 19.07.22). Yankuba has since appealed against the verdict.

Media reports repeatedly express fears that transitional justice efforts are stalled or generally lack credibility. On 25.05.22, the government committed to implement almost all recommendations of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), including the prosecution of 70 (non-amnestied) members of the previous government, including Jammeh (see BN 30.05.22). Meanwhile, in late June 2022, Justice Minister Dawda Jallow told a parliamentary committee that the government would lack the financial resources in 2022 to implement the TRRC recommendations. The Ministry of Justice has also not yet responded to recent press enquiries about the state of enforcement of the announced suspensions of still active civil servants (cf. BN of 20.06.22), who are accused of crimes committed under the Jammeh government. The APRC has once again become a political power factor, which could endanger the transitional justice system, the press said. The government of President Adama Barrow, who was re-elected for another five-year term at the end of 2021, is supported by a controversial coalition with the former ruling party, Jammeh's Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction - APRC, which has split in the meantime (cf. BN of 08.11.21). In the newly elected parliament (April 2022) it entered into an alliance under Barrow. With the current APRC party leader Fabakary Tombong Jatta (former APRC majority leader under Jammeh) and APRC member Seedy Njie (former minister of information under Jammeh), President Barrow constitutionally appointed two close former Jammeh confidants as members of parliament. Jatta, who declared in 2021 that he wanted to "trash" the TRRC report, was appointed Speaker of Parliament and Njie was appointed Deputy Speaker of Parliament.

Haiti

Hundreds of victims of violence in a few days; UN advocate arms embargo

A resolution adopted by the UN Security Council on 15.07.22 advocates a ban on small-calibre weapons and ammunition for non-state actors. Furthermore, it should become possible to impose additional sanctions on gang leaders. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 234 people were killed or injured by gang-related violence in the densely populated slum of Cité Soleil in the capital Port-au-Prince from 08.07.22 to 12.07.22 alone. The UN registered 934 deaths, 684 injuries and 680 kidnappings in connection with acts of violence in the first half of the year.

Honduras

Killing of a son of former President Lobo and others

On 14.07.22, one of former President Lobo's sons, Said Lobo Bonilla, and three others were killed by armed assailants after visiting a nightclub in Tegucigalpa. Initial police investigations led to the arrest of six people and five more are wanted. According to police reports, the MS-13 gang was responsible for the deadly attack. The target was the son of the former president, there is no further information on the motive for the killings, as yet. According to the National Commission for Human Rights (CONADEH), crime in the country has increased in recent years, with at least 97,600 people killed between 2000 and June 2022.

Iran

Wave of arrests

The wave of arrests continues for the second week in a row. According to media reports, filmmakers, and relatives of victims of the November 2019 protests are particularly affected. On 11.07.22, the well-known director Jafar Panahi was arrested and taken away from the office of the Evin public prosecutor's office when he wanted to inquire about the whereabouts of his two colleagues Muhammad Rasulov and Mustafa Al-e Ahmad, who had been arrested on 08.07.22 (cf. BN of 11.07.22). According to the report, Panahi's arrest is connected to a prison sentence that was imposed on the director more than twelve years ago. Also, on 11.07.22, six mothers whose children had died during the protests at the end of 2019 were arrested. Furthermore, a large number of other people, who were said to be relatives of the November 2019 victims, were arrested on the same grounds. A news agency close to the Revolutionary Guards said that those arrested had been instructed by foreign intelligence services to instigate riots. The arrest of the reformist politician Mustafa Tajzadeh was widely reported, especially on social media. The opposition politician was arrested at his home by revolutionary guards on the night of 11.07.22. No information is available about the reasons for the arrest. On 13.07.22, two women were arrested for opposing the hijab requirement in public. The two women had responded to a call of the protest action "There is no hijab at all" on the occasion of the Day of Hijab and Virtue announced by the government on 12.07.22.

Arrests in the region around Oshnaviyeh (West Azerbaijan province)

Referring to a Kurdish human rights organisation, foreign media report that on 13.07.22 at least eight people were arrested by employees of the Ministry of Information in two villages near the city of Oshnaviyeh. According to unconfirmed sources of the Kurdish Human Rights Network, the arrests were a response to speeches made in two local mosques in memory of Abdulrahman Ghasemlou, the former Secretary General of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan Iran (DPK-I), who was assassinated in 1989.

Environmental protests: at least 16 arrests

According to media reports, on 16.07.22 protests were held against the progressive drying up of Lake Urmia and the lack of attention paid to it by local authorities in the cities of Tabriz (East Azerbaijan province), Naghadeh and Urmia (West Azerbaijan). Several protesters were arrested, according to the local police chief. Among the reasons given were disturbance of public order and destruction of public property. Environmental activists subsequently published the names of 16 people who had been arrested. Lake Urmia stretches between the cities of Urmia and Tabriz in the northwest of the country. According to the UN Environment Programme, the lake has been shrinking since 1995 due to continued water extraction for agricultural purposes and frequent droughts in the region.

Iraq

KRG reports the deaths of four IS fighters

On 05.07.22, an IS hideout was busted by Iraqi security forces and coalition forces during a battle near Karakoch in Nineveh. Four IS fighters died and several supporters of the group were arrested. Two of the dead were identified by the authorities of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). They had taken part in the attack on a family in Makhmour in December 2021 (cf. BN of 06.12.21).

Drone attack near Mosul

On 17.07.22, a drone attack near Mosul killed five people and injured two others. Various sources report that the drone attack was carried out by the Turkish army. Kurdish security circles informed that the victims were PKK members, which the PKK denies.

Ivory Coast

Meeting of Ouattara, Gbagbo, and Bédié

President Alassane Ouattara (Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix, RHDP) received his predecessors Laurent Gbagbo (Parti des Peuples Africains - Côte d'Ivoire, PPA-CI) and Henri Konan Bédié (Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire - Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, PDCI-RDA) on 14.07.22. The first meeting of this group received a lot of media attention. The content of their exchange, which lasted about an hour, was not disclosed. The three expressed the hope that their meeting would contribute to "easing the socio-political tensions in the country". Ouattara advocated more regular meetings of this kind in the future.

The 2010 presidential election, in which Ouattara, with Bédié's support, defeated the then incumbent Gbagbo, had triggered a crisis that left about 3,000 dead. Gbagbo, who refused to concede defeat, was arrested in April 2011 and transferred to The Hague in November 2011 for serious crimes against humanity. He returned to the country after an acquittal by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on 17.06.21 and had met with Ouattara once before on 27.07.21 (cf. BN of 21.06.21 and 02.08.21).

Proposed law to legalise polygamy

On 30.06.22, an RHDP member of parliament, and thus a member of the government majority, introduced a bill to allow plural marriages, both multiple wives of one man and multiple husbands of one woman, with the consent of the future spouses. This can be read from media reports that address reactions to the proposal. The MP himself had said that polygamy was a taboo, even though it was part of daily life. Two women's rights organisations, Ligue ivoirienne des droits des femmes and Association pour le droit des femmes, condemn the bill as retrogressive and point to existing constitutional and international law. Monogamous marriage has been enshrined in law since 1964.

Lebanon

Economic situation

On 14.07.22, the parliamentary budget committee approved a loan of USD 150 million from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The funds are earmarked for the purchase of wheat on the world market to prevent or mitigate widespread hunger. In recent weeks, stocks of flour had fallen sharply and many bakeries had to close at least temporarily. Before this, Lebanon had agreed to several reforms. The IMF made the loan conditional above all on a significant weakening of Lebanese banking secrecy to help fight corruption.

Libya

National Unity Government appoints new chairman of the National Oil Corporation

In a decree issued by the Government of National Unity (GNU) on 13.07.22, its Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbaiba appointed Farhat Bengdara as the new head of the National Oil Corporation (NOC), according to media reports. The position had been held by Mustafa Sanalla since 2014; Sanalla rejected his dismissal, citing Dbaiba's lack of authority to order his removal since his political mandate, as well as that of his government, had already expired. The energy committee of the eastern-based parliament also rejected the GNU's move. Thus, the power struggle between the rival governments of the GNU and the Bashagha-led Government of National Stability (GNS) for control of the important energy company continues to intensify.

After negotiations with local groups that had initiated a halt to oil production at several production facilities in the south and east since April 2022, the NOC now announced the resumption of oil production on 15.07.22 (cf. BN of 25.04.22). The Libyan economy, scarred by many years of armed conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, is heavily dependent on oil exports.

Mali

People die in attack on a checkpoint

In the night of 15.07.22, the Zantiguila checkpoint, about 70 km from the capital Bamako, was attacked. The checkpoint is located on the main road connecting Bamako and the city of Ségou, about 240 km to the north. Unknown armed assailants reportedly killed three civilians and three members of the security forces. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Nigeria

Kaduna State: High ransom demand for abducted priests

According to media reports, unknown persons abducted two more Catholic priests in Kaduna State on 15.07.22. Similar acts had last occurred in early July 2022 (cf. BN of 11.07.22). According to reports, around a dozen Christian clergymen - most of them Roman Catholic - have been abducted in Nigeria since May 2022. In some cases, the victims of such kidnappings die (cf. BN of 04.07.22), in other cases they are released against ransom payments. For the two priests abducted on 15.07.22, a ransom of NGN 50 million (approx. EUR 120,000, at the rate of 18.07.22) was demanded, followed by NGN 40 million (approx. EUR 95,000, at the rate of 18.07.22). According to a church representative responsible for Kaduna, the parish of the two priests is unable to raise such a high amount.

Food crisis in the North-West

Malnutrition threatens the lives of thousands of children in north-western Nigeria. This was pointed out by the aid organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in a press release dated 07.07.22. MSF, in cooperation with Nigerian health authorities, has already treated more than 50,000 severely malnourished children in five north-western states since January 2022, including 7,000 who required hospital treatment. The aid agency fears that the situation will continue to worsen unless humanitarian aid is stepped up.

Zamfara State: Civilians to arm themselves

According to media reports of late June 2022, the government of the north-western state of Zamfara has officially encouraged locals to arm themselves for their own protection from violent attacks and kidnappings in the region. Authorities have been instructed to issue licences to carry weapons to qualified civilians upon request. In response thereto, the Nigerian Minister of Information criticised Zamfara's government, saying that it would be more effective if the state governors supported the federal government in the fight for more security. Another government measure to curb gang crime in Zamfara and other north-western states is a ban on motorbikes (cf. BN of 28.03.22). In this region, criminals usually use motorbikes to get to their destinations and escape again.

North Macedonia

EU accession negotiations: Parliament approves compromise with Bulgaria

On 16.07.22, Northern Macedonia's parliament approved the EU Commission's proposed negotiating framework for EU accession talks, which also includes a French compromise proposal for the dispute with Bulgaria. According to current media reports, this vote strengthens the EU Commission's hope for the long-awaited early start of EU accession negotiations with North Macedonia (as well as with Albania), which so far had been blocked by Bulgaria's veto (cf. BN of 11.07.22). There had been no dissenting votes in the voting, but the MPs of the nationalist party had stayed away in protest. On 24.06.22, the Bulgarian parliament had authorised its government to approve the compromise proposal in the long-running dispute with North Macedonia over the historical interpretation of identity issues; the final vote of the Bulgarian government was still pending because of the current government crisis.

Palestinian Territories / Israel

Gaza Strip / Israel: Rocket fire

According to the Israeli military, two rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel on 16.07.22. One was intercepted by the missile defence system, the other crashed into open ground without causing any damage. Just a few hours later, the Israeli military said it shelled two Hamas sites, including an underground storage site for raw materials used in rocket construction. The rocket fire also caused damage to civilian residential buildings, such as the shattering of windows. There were no reports of casualties.

The exchange of fire followed shortly after US President Biden's visit to Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

Issuance of further Israeli work permits as well as status legalisation for Palestinians

On 12.07.22, shortly before the US President's visit to Israel and the Palestinian Territories, Israeli authorities announced the introduction of further "goodwill gestures" towards the Palestinian population. Thus, 5,500 Palestinian persons are to be added to the Palestinian Population Register. It is estimated that several tens of thousands of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are not included in this register, which is co-controlled by Israeli authorities. As a result, they cannot obtain official residence permits and are thus subject to severe restrictions on their freedom of movement as well as the permanent risk of repatriation.

In addition, another 1,500 work permits for Israel are to be issued to Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. According to the AP News agency, this would make a total of 15,500 permits issued, the highest number since 2007.

Peru

Peasant patrols: Women abducted and whipped for witchcraft

According to information from the Peruvian Public Prosecutor's Office and the Human Rights ombudsperson, at the end of June 2022, seven women were abducted in Chillia when so-called autonomous peasant patrols (rondas campesinas), which sometimes act as law enforcers in rural areas, accused them of practising witchcraft, held them for up to two weeks and whipped them. The women were released following negotiations. Already on 08.07.22, a peasant patrol had been accused of threats, theft of equipment and a short abduction by two media representatives of the TV channel América TV.

Russian Federation

Strengthening the law on "foreign agents"

According to press reports, on 14.07.22 President Putin signed the "Law on Control of the Activities of Persons under Foreign Influence", thus expanding the circle of persons and organisations that face classification as "foreign agents". Actors registered as such by the Ministry of Justice are subject to numerous requirements, including reporting and identification requirements for finances and publications. The amendment to the law will allow to declare not only actors who receive financial support from abroad "foreign agents", rather, any unspecified "foreign influence" will suffice, once the law enters into force on 01.12.22. Furthermore, the law will in future also apply to those active in hitherto formally protected areas such as science, health care and welfare if their activities run counter to national interests. The amendment also provides for 18 additional requirements for "foreign agents", including the prohibition to organise public events and to teach at public educational institutions, as well as the establishment of a new, publicly available list of persons who are or have been in contact with registered actors. Government critics fear that the amendment will further intensify repressions against civil society. Already in the past, numerous actors classified as "foreign agents" were forced to give up their activities due to the extensive requirements and high fines for non-compliance or were forcibly dissolved by court order.

Somalia

Fatalities after fighting at Bossaso airport (Puntland)

At least 15 people were killed and several injured in a major shoot-out at Bossaso airport on 11.07.22. The clash between rival forces was triggered by the arrival of Somalia's deputy speaker of parliament Sadia Yasin Samatar, who accompanied relief supplies sent by the Somali federal government for the drought-stricken Bari region. Puntland Security Forces attempted to enter the airport to escort Samatar and the aid convoy. In doing so, they ignored the ban on weapons on the premises, resulting in an armed confrontation with the airport security forces and casualties on both sides, including civilians. The plane was then turned away at the airport and flew back to Mogadishu. The incident occurred a few weeks after the Puntland authorities announced that they would stop cooperating with the federal government to protest the appointment of Hamza Abdi Barre as prime minister.

Bombing of a hotel in Jowhar (Middle Shabelle)

On 17.07.22, a suicide attack with an explosives-laden lorry outside a hotel popular with politicians in the city of Jowhar killed at least twelve people. Dozens more were injured. Several adjacent residential and commercial buildings were reportedly damaged in the attack. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack and announced that members of the armed forces and political figures were killed. According to official reports, two regional ministers were among the injured.

Prison break in Galkayo (Mudug)

On 14.07.22, seven al-Shabaab leaders escaped from Galkayo prison. The Puntland authorities had previously sentenced the prisoners to death. Security forces said they killed one escapee and arrested three others. The other three fighters managed to escape.

South Sudan

Security situation in Eastern Equatorial State

According to the South Sudanese authorities, more than 230 people have been killed in the past three weeks in fighting between different ethnic groups in the south of the country. Since the beginning of July 2022, violent clashes over livestock and grazing land had erupted repeatedly, especially in Eastern Equatorial State. Fights and fatalities are usually caused by cattle theft or unauthorised land grabbing, this is followed by revenge attacks. Due to the ongoing violence, the UN recently warned of the danger of a relapse into civil war.

Sri Lanka

Current political developments

On 13.07.22, ahead of his planned resignation, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his wife fled to the Maldives in a military plane and travelled on to Singapore the following day. Since then, the unpopular Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has been acting as caretaker president and was sworn in as such on 15.07.22. On the night before, Rajapaksa's letter of resignation was first received by email and then sent by post from Singapore. Parliament is due to elect a new president on 20.07.22. According to reports, Dullas Alahapperuma, a long-time MP from the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), and Anura Kumara Dissanayake, representing the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party, are also standing for election besides Wickremesinghe (United National Party, UNP) and opposition leader Sajith Premadasa (Samagi Jana Balawegaya, SJB). After the previous troubled weekend (cf. BN of 11.07.22) and the resignation announcements of the president and the prime minister, at least four ministers resigned from their posts. On 13.07.22, protesters managed to storm Wickremesinghe's office, undeterred by the security forces' use of tear gas. They consider him an ally of the Rajapaksas and are demanding his resignation as well. Around 42 people were injured. A state of emergency was declared throughout the country. On 14.07.22, a spokesperson for the protesters announced that they would withdraw from the occupied buildings but would continue the protest in front of the president's office.

Sudan

Protests continue

Protests against the military transitional government continue. On 11.07.22, more than 14 people were injured in Khartoum when security forces cracked down on a sit-in. According to a medical association, many of the injuries were caused by tear gas or by being hit with tear gas canisters. Two protesters were hit by vehicles driven by the security forces.

On 12.07.22, an unknown number of protesters were injured when security forces broke up a sit-in in Omdurman town and allegedly used live ammunition.

A total of four camps were set up for the sit-in protests on 01.07.22: two in Khartoum and one each in Omdurman and the northern district of Khartoum. In the meantime, however, two camps - in Omdurman and in Khartoum - have been dismantled by the activists themselves.

On 17.07.22, a protest in Khartoum was dispersed by security forces using tear gas. Roadblocks had previously been set up to prevent further participants from joining the protests.

Flooding in the rainy season

Since the start of the rainy season in June 2022, approximately 6,250 people in Kassala, White Nile, and South Kordofan states have been directly affected by local flooding and need help. These regions experienced very heavy rainfall, especially over the last weekend. On 12.07.22, representatives of various authorities toured the affected regions and initiated measures to repair the flood damage. Other regions are intensifying their preparations for possible flooding.

The rainy season usually lasts from June to September and is heaviest in August and September. Last year, over 11,000 people were affected by flooding in Kassala alone, and over 314,000 nationwide.

Security situation in Blue Nile State

Violent clashes between the two ethnic groups of the Hausa and the Berta escalated at the beginning of last week and continued until 16.07.22. According to administrative authorities in Blue Nile State, up to 31 people were killed. The Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors initially reported 23 people killed and 84 injured. Media reports, however, say that at least 60 to 65 people were killed and 150 injured. The fighting concentrated in the towns of Gaissan, Roseiris, and Wad Al-Mahi.

There are different accounts of the reasons for the outbreak of the fighting. One version says that it was triggered by the dispute between Hausa and Berta farmers. There is contradictory information on which side started the dispute. Other sources say that the two groups could not agree on the formation of a civilian body to regulate access to land.

Army and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) units were deployed to bring the situation back under control, night curfews and assembly bans were imposed.

Syria

Idlib: Import of international aid supplies extended after all

After the Russians vetoed the extension of the previous mandate for international aid deliveries across the Turkish-Syrian border on 08.07.22 (cf. BN of 10.07.22), the members of the UN Security Council finally managed to agree on a compromise proposal on 12.07.22 that also accommodates Russia's wishes and initially extends the aid for only six months. About four million people are currently dependent on aid deliveries to the rebel-controlled area in Idlib.

The majority of the other permanent members of the UN Security Council had originally rejected the Russian proposal because an extension by six months seemed too short and might expire in the wintertime, when the need for aid will be greatest. In addition, the short duration would complicate planning for international aid agencies, they said. The three permanent Western members of the Council, the USA, Great Britain, and France, therefore abstained in the vote on 12 July 2002.

US: Senior IS member killed in Aleppo

On 12.07.22, the US military announced that it had killed the leader of IS in Syria, Maher al-Agal, in a drone strike near Jindires, a town in the north-western part of Aleppo governorate near the Turkish border.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, al-Agal was a well-known commander in Raqqa, the then "capital" of the caliphate in Syria, until the city was captured by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in 2017. In 2020, he reportedly moved to Afrin, where he led a rebel group under the larger rebel alliance of the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army.

Togo

Attacks claim lives

According to the official account, unknown gunmen attacked several villages in the prefectures of Kpendjal and Kpendjal-Ouest (Savanes region) in a coordinated and complex way on the night of 15.07.22. Deaths and injuries were caused thereby. Reprtedly one of the villages affected was Blamonga, where at least eight people lost their lives.

Military attack cause victims among the population

In the night of 10.07.22, an explosion killed seven children and young people in Margba (Tône prefecture). Two other people were injured. The Togolese military informed on 14.07.22, that these individuals were hit by an air strike because they had been mistaken for jihadists. Various sources had initially suspected an attack by jihadists. The incident happened in the Savanes region, an area in the north of the country bordering with Burkina Faso, for which the Togolese government had declared a security emergency in June 2022 (cf. BN of 20.06.22). The region had experienced attacks by extremists in November 2021 and May 2022 (cf. BN of 15.11.21 and 16.05.22).

Turkey

ECtHR fines Turkey in Kavala case

On 11.07.22, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ordered Turkey to pay a fine of EUR 7,500 to cultural promoter Osman Kavala in connection with his detention. The court held that Turkey had disregarded the ECtHR's 2019 ruling to immediately release Kavala. Kavala was last sentenced to life in prison in April 2022 in connection with the 2013 Gezi protests, which drew sharp international criticism. Kavala has been in prison since 2017. Already in 2019, the ECtHR had criticised his detention as politically motivated. Turkey had initially said that he was partly responsible for the Gezi Park protests of 2013 and then accused him of taking part in the coup attempt of 2016. After an acquittal in 2020, he was immediately re-arrested on espionage charges.

Investigation result in the case of Aysel Tuğluk

On 14.06.22, the Turkish Forensic Medicine Council (ATK) stated in an expert opinion that imprisoned HDP politician Aysel Tuğluk, who suffers from dementia, is still capable of serving her sentence in prison. It is the third time that the ATK has issued such an opinion for Tuğluk, who is currently detained in a maximum-security prison in Kocaeli province. Lawyers for the detainee stated that statements by Tuğluk's cellmates and the expert opinion submitted by the Turkish Human Rights Foundation (TİHV) on the Kurdish politician's state of health showed that she is unable to continue serving her sentence in prison. Tuğluk was arrested on 29.12.16 and sentenced to ten years in prison for supporting a terrorist organisation.

Ukraine

War and humanitarian situation

The war in Ukraine continues to massively affect the civilian population. According to media reports, Russian forces are currently mainly attacking by flying air strikes on areas close to the front line. Rocket explosions with civilian casualties and deaths were reported from the cities of Kharkiv, Dnipro, Mykolaiv, Bachmut, Sloviansk, Kramatorsk as well as from the regions of Dnipropetrovsk and Sumy on 17.07. and 18.07.22. However, areas of Ukraine far from

the front line suffer continuous direct attacks as well; on 14.07.22, missile strikes in the city of Vinnytsia killed at least 24 people and injured over 200, according to local authorities. According to Ukrainian government figures, over 17,000 civilian and 300 military targets have been attacked in Ukraine since the Russian onslaught began on 24.02.22. Media report the end of the Russian forces' operational pause as fighting in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine is stepped up again. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate throughout the country, most seriously in the directly contested or occupied areas of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya in southern and eastern Ukraine. Current UN estimates put the number of people in need of food at around 10.2 million and the number of people in need of water and sanitation at around 13 million. On 17.07.22 President Zelensky announced the dismissal of the Ukrainian Prosecutor General and the head of the domestic intelligence service SBU citing incidents of cooperation between Ukrainian officials and Russian occupation authorities in Ukraine. A total of 651 criminal cases for high treason and collaboration have already been registered against employees of the prosecution and law enforcement agencies. Since the stricter legislation in this field entered into force on 15.03.22, collaboration with institutions of the Russian Federation can be punished with up to 15 years' imprisonment. According to an OSCE report on the human rights situation in Ukraine of 14.07.22, human rights violations committed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine are manifested by the establishment of so-called filtration camps for the civilian population and the tendency to circumvent international obligations for persons taken into custody by extraditing them to the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics in eastern Ukraine. The de facto government of the Donetsk People's Republic announced on 08.07.22 that it was lifting the current moratorium on the death penalty. On 09.06.22, two British and one Moroccan national had been sentenced to death in Donetsk for "mercenary activities"; all convicts had joined the Ukrainian army to support the war effort as volunteers (cf. BN of 13.06.22).

Venezuela

Temporary protected status for Venezuelan nationals in the USA extended

On 11.07.22, the US Secretary of Homeland Security announced the extension of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuelan migrants. However, the 18-month extension, which takes effect on 10.09.22 and is valid until 10.03.24, only applies to persons who entered the USA prior to or on 08.03.21. According to current government estimates, about 340,000 people are eligible.

Salary payments for teachers suspended for participating in protests

In an interview with Radio Fe y Alegría Noticias on 12.07.22, the president of Formación para la Dirigencia Sindical (Fordisi) criticised the suspension of salary payments to more than 3,000 teachers in the regions of Carabobo, Guárico, Portuguesa, and Caracas. According to Sánchez, the suspension was related to the affected teachers' participation in protests and their public criticism of grievances in the education system.

Security in Venezuelan border areas

According to a report on violent security incidents in the border area published on 14.07.22 by the NGO Fundaredes, their number has decreased by 38 % in the first half of 2022 compared to the same period last year. Thus, in the first six months, the organisation recorded a total of 362 killings in the states of Amazonas, Apure, Bolívar, Falcón, Táchira, and Zulia. Zulia, in the border area with Colombia, recorded most of the violent clashes (7) in June 2022, with a total of 18 fatalities.

Vietnam

Activist arrested

On 05.07.22, the well-known democracy activist and blogger Nguyen Lan Thang was arrested in Hanoi based on Article 117 of the Criminal Code (dissemination of anti-state information). In the past, he campaigned including for the development of civil society in the country and participated in protests against China's actions in the South China Sea.

Blogger sentenced to prison

A court in Ha Tinh province sentenced a blogger to five years and six months imprisonment on 13.07.22, again based on Art. 117 of the Criminal Code. He wrote Facebook posts about human rights violations by the Vietnamese government and was arrested in January 2022.

Yemen

Humanitarian situation

On 15.07.22, Hossam Elsharkawi, Regional Director of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), said that the humanitarian situation had not improved since the ceasefire, which was mainly due to the increase in food prices caused by the war in Ukraine. In this context, he also drew attention to the vulnerable situation of children, some of whom are already dying due to malnutrition. He also mentioned the urgent problem of contaminated drinking water, calling it one of Yemen's foremost problems in recent weeks.

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