



Briefing Notes

Group 62 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Governance: Requirements for government employees, no international recognition

On 20.07.22, local sources in Ghazni province reported that a Taliban delegation from the Ministry of Virtue from Kabul had arrived in the province and was forcing all male government employees to grow beards and wear turbans. Those who fail to comply with this order within a week will be punished. Originally, these requirements had not been binding. On 18.07.22 The Guardian reported that the Taliban have ordered women working in the Afghan Finance Ministry in Kabul to send male relatives to replace them at the job. A woman in Takhar province has been flogged by the Taliban for moving in public space without a male companion (mahram).

On 22.07.22, the EU Ambassador for Afghanistan, Andreas von Brandt, reiterated in the European Parliament that there is a broad consensus throughout the Western world not to recognise the Taliban and that this will not change in the near future.

Media: Meta blocks Taliban pages on FB and Instagram

Meta, the US operator of Facebook (FB) and Instagram, blocked the pages of the Bakhtar News Agency and the Afghan State Television (RTA) on these two portals on 20.07.22 because they are controlled by the Taliban. According to US law, the Taliban are a terrorist organisation and therefore not allowed to use FB or Instagram. In the wake of the ban, there has also been a Twitter campaign calling for the Taliban to be banned from Twitter (#BanTaliban). Many Afghans inside and outside the country are calling for banning the Taliban's access to social media in general. On the other hand, there has been a hashtag on Twitter calling for support for the Taliban, which is especially popular in Pakistan (#AfghansSupportTaliban).

Persecution situation: New UN report on the human rights situation

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) issued a new report on the human rights situation on 20.07.22. It states that between 15.08.21 and 15.06.22, there were 2,106 civilian casualties (700 killed, 1,406 injured), mostly from improvised explosive device (IED) attacks attributed to the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP). The Taliban themselves are responsible for 160 extra-judicial killings, 178 arbitrary arrests and detentions, 23 cases of incommunicado detention and 56 cases of torture and ill-treatment of former security forces and government officials, according to the report. Hasht-e Subh reported on 18.07.22 that according to sources in the Attorney General's Office of Afghanistan, 26 prosecutors from the former government have been murdered since the Taliban came to power.

Brazil

At least 18 killed in police raid in Rio de Janeiro slum

According to the military police, at least 18 people were killed on 21.07.22 during a raid to arrest members of a criminal organisation in the favela called Complexo do Alemão in Rio de Janeiro. The fatalities included 16 suspected criminals as well as a bystander and a police officer. NGOs as well as the Ombudsman's office point to indications of human rights violations and disproportionate use of force, saying that in the aftermath of the operation local residents took many more injured persons to hospitals. The Rio Ombudsman's Office cites similarities to a fatal police operation about a year ago in the Jacarezinho favela (cf. BN of 17.05.21) and says that the available data indicate that the total number of deaths is often higher when an officer is killed during such an operation and that the security forces' actions become more ruthless.

Colombia

Armed non-state groups, ceasefire offered

On 21.07.22, six armed non-state groups, including the Clan del Golfo, los Rastrojos and los Caparros, held out the prospect of a ceasefire as a starting point for peace negotiations with the new government. In the preceding weeks, the last of incumbent President Duque's term, the paramilitary group Clan del Golfo intensified its attacks on state security forces, partly in response to the arrest and extradition of its leader Otoniel in May 2022. As part of the so-called Plan Pistola directed against state security forces, large sums of money have been staked on the killing of police officers in recent weeks. Officers from the department of Antioquia were particularly affected by deadly attacks, most recently on 24.07.22. According to police reports, the increase in deadly violence is also linked to disputes over succession within the group as well as its positioning as a powerful and influential negotiating partner for the successor government.

DR Congo

HRW: Disastrous human rights and humanitarian situation, little progress in reform since change of power

Human Rights Watch (HRW) described the human rights and humanitarian situation as "disastrous", even years after the change at the head of state. The report goes on to say that this is particularly true in the eastern conflict provinces, where massacres and crimes against the civilian population continue and some 2,600 civilians have been killed since the state of siege came into force in May 2021. The number of internally displaced persons has reached a record high.

So far, the reform efforts of President Félix Tshisekedi have not brought about a fundamental change in the human rights situation. Critical voices continue to be silenced and democratic space restricted. Under President Tshisekedi, who released political prisoners and allowed exiled persons to return to the DRC during his first year in office, repression against people critical of the government, activists, protesters, and media representatives has increased in the last two years, HRW said. Nor can an intensification of the repressions be ruled out in the coming months in the wake of the general elections scheduled for 2023, according to HRW. The electoral process is fraught with various challenges and conflicts, including an electoral law that was recently passed without consensus, the controversial appointments to the Independent National Electoral Commission against the resistance of the opposition and civil society (cf. BN of 15.11.21 and 25.10.21), and widespread doubts about the fairness of the 2023 elections. Furthermore, there has been insufficient progress in reforming the judiciary and in combating widespread impunity and corruption.

Situation of Rwandophone and/or Tutsi people and Banyamulenge, no recent incidents known.

A lawyer of Tutsi ethnicity residing in the provincial capital of Goma (North Kivu) stated under anonymity to The New Humanitarian that persons had been targeted for arrest and interrogation because of their Tutsi morphology or just because they are Kinyarwanda speakers. The lawyer had gone into hiding after the pogrom-like attacks against the Rwandan and Congolese Tutsi population during the mass protest in Goma (cf. BN of 20.06.22). According to him, the situation escalated after the police commander asked the local population to use machetes

to defend the city against the "enemy". Everyone knew who was meant by this. No further ethnically motivated, actual or attempted killings and violence against Rwandan, Rwandophone and Tutsi people or members of the Banyamulenge Tutsi or people suspected of being such, merely because of their physiognomy or language (cf. BN of 27.06.22 and 20.06.22), have become publicly known in the country in July 2022 so far.

The president of the Tutsi community in Goma, David Karambi, said that although appeals for calm had been made by local authorities and community leaders, a resurgence of violence could not be ruled out at present because of the overall situation resulting from the resurgence of the Mouvement 23 (M23) rebel group and the tensions with the neighbouring state of Rwanda (cf. BN of 04.07.22 and 11.07.22).

Central and Western Congo: Security situation, inter-communal disputes

On 19.07.22, UNHCR spokesperson Boris Cheshirkov reported on another voluntary repatriation of Congolese nationals from Angola to the western Congolese territories that are under the full control of the Congolese government, and said that the improved security situation in western Congo would provide the returnees with an opportunity to return in dignity and security. The returnees' destinations are various western and some central Congolese provinces, including the provinces of Kasai, Kasai-Central, Kwilu, Sankuru, Lomami, Lualaba and the urban province/capital Kinshasa. Many returnees had fled political and ethnic violence, including the Kamuina-Nsapu rebellion, in the Kasai region (Kasai, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Sankuru, Lomami provinces) between 2016 and 2018. Apart from other damages, the conflicts resulted in over three thousand deaths and an estimated 1.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Since 2020 and up to now, ethnically motivated and/or land-related inter-communal clashes are occasionally reported from the Kasai region and Lualaba province. Past press coverage from 2022 indicated that there had been inter-communal clashes over land in such territories as Katanda (Kasai Oriental), Dimbelenge (Kasai-Central), Ngandajika (Lomami) and Lodja (Sankuru) resulting in deaths, injuries, rapes, burning of houses and displacement.

Ghana

Corruption investigation

According to a joint study (Ghana Integrity of Public Services Survey, GIPSS) presented on 20.07.22 by the National Human Rights Commission (CHRAJ), the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 24 public agencies were compared to establish the prevalence of corruption and it turned out that it was most widespread in the Ghana Police Service (GPS). 53 % of police officers accepted bribes in 2021, the study found. The GPS were followed by immigration officers (37.4%) and customs officers (33.6%). In total, more than 17.4 million bribes were paid in 2021. In nine out of ten cases, bribes were paid in cash. By reaching almost five billion GHS (approx. 600 million EUR, as of 25.07.22), the total amount of all bribes accepted in cash by government officials was equivalent to almost one third of the Ministry of Education's budget for 2021. For this study 15,000 people were interviewed in urban and rural areas in all regions of the country.

The Gambia

"The Voice" editor-in-chief notes progress in the freedom of the press

The editor-in-chief of the Gambian newspaper The Voice, Musa Sheriff, expressed his appreciation for the progress made in press freedom since the change in state leadership and for the government's support for the press at the height of the Covid crisis. The newspaper, which could not operate freely under former President Yahya Jammeh and whose staff had faced arrests and prosecutions at the time, can operate freely under President Adama Barrow, according to Sheriff. According to largely unanimous information, freedom of the press has improved continuously since the change of power, despite the residues of the repressive legal framework from the Jammeh era (cf. BN of 09.05.22). Violent attacks against media representatives by state and non-state actors are less frequent but do occur.

Iran

Human rights lawyer must serve eight-year prison term

According to foreign media reports, lawyer and human rights activist Mohammad Ali Dadkhah was arrested on 20.07.22 and taken to Tehran's Evin Prison. He is now serving the remaining eight years of a nine-year sentence he received in 2011. He had been accused of plotting to overthrow the regime. Dadkhah had already been imprisoned in 2012 but was released against bail in 2013. As a lawyer, he has represented numerous arrested opposition activists and is a founding member of the Centre of Human Rights Defenders (Persian: Kanun-e modafa'an-e hoquq-e bashar), an organisation that was founded in Iran, which counts prominent activists such as Narges Mohammadi, Shirin Ebadi, lawyer Abdolfattah Soltani and Nasrin Sotudeh among its members.

Prison conditions: Activist transferred to another prison after hunger strike and solitary confinement

Foreign media report that Manuchehr Bakhtiari, an activist sentenced to three and a half years imprisonment in July 2021, was transferred from solitary confinement in Karaj to Qazvin Central Prison, northwest of Tehran, on 20.07.22. Since his son was killed in the November 2019 riots (cf. BN of 19.07.21) he has been publicly demanding justice for all victims of the security forces. Most recently, he condemned the recent arrests and convictions of relatives of victims of the November protests while in detention (cf. BN of 18.07.22). According to information provided by his lawyer, he was first transferred to solitary confinement after a hunger strike and finally exiled to Qazvin prison. On 24.07.22, the transfer of other prisoners from detention centres in Tehran and from the women's prison in Qarchak (south of Tehran) were also reported.

Forced transfers are often used to impose restrictions on prisoners, such as co-housing them with convicts serving time for serious crimes and visiting restrictions.

Religious minorities: Baha'i arrested in the cities of Shiraz and Yazd

According to media reports on 20.07.22, a total of eight members of the Baha'i Faith were arrested by security forces in the cities of Shiraz (Fars province) and Yazd (province of the same name). The exact reasons for the arrests were not disclosed. No information about their whereabouts and any charges against them were available. According to reports on 21.07.22, a spokesperson for the Baha'i International Community had indicated that more than 20 Baha'is in the cities of Shiraz, Tehran, Yazd and Boynurd (North Khorasan Province) had been subject to arrests, house searches or business closures since the beginning of July 2022.

Iraq

Turkish military operation in northern Iraq

On 20.07.22, the Turkish military shelled the village of Parakh in Zakho district with artillery shells. The village is popular with domestic tourists. Nine tourists died and another 23 were injured. The following day, protests erupted in several towns demanding that the Turkish ambassador be expelled from the country. The latter was summoned on 21.07.22 and was handed a sharp protest note. There were at least two rocket attacks on Turkish military posts including the Zilkan base. On 23.07.22, the Ministry of Defence presented a comprehensive report on the Turkish military operation to parliament. According to the report, more than 4,000 Turkish soldiers are currently stationed on Iraqi soil, forward posts have been established up to 105 km deep into Iraqi territory, the Turkish army maintains a total of five bases and about 100 outposts on Iraqi territory.

IS attack

On 19.07.22, IS attacked the Iraqi Federal Police in Salah ad-Din province, Matibiyya district. At least six federal police officers died in the attack and others were injured. IS continues to have a strong presence in the Matibiyya district and poses a considerable threat.

On 21.07.22, in Diyala province, members of a family on their way back from an outing north of Mansuriyya were attacked by IS forces, five people were killed, among them two children aged five and seven. The background is unclear, Mansuriyya regularly experiences IS attacks, which are often part of local feuds.

Lebanon

Economic situation

In an effort to end the strikes that have rendered large parts of the public sector de facto inoperable, the responsible committee agreed to a series of measures on 18.07.22. In the process, a unilateral wage increase for judges was withdrawn and replaced by general measures: two additional salaries will be paid for July and August 2022 each, and the commuting allowance will be increased retroactively to March 2022. These measures are intended to compensate for a significant part of the losses caused by inflation.

Libya

Violent clashes in Tripoli and Misrata

According to media reports, at least 16 people were killed and 52 others injured in violent clashes between armed groups supporting the respective rival governments, the Government of National Stability (GNS) and the Government of National Unity (GNU), in Tripoli on 21.07.22 and 22.07.22. In the western outskirts of Misrata, the hometown of the two rival prime ministers Abdul Hamid Dbaiba and Fathi Bashagha, fighting between two armed groups is reported to have resulted in at least one death on 23.07.22

Mauretania

Protests in several cities caused by fuel price hike

According to media reports, people took to the streets in Nouakchott and other cities to protest the up to 30% increase in fuel prices on 18.07.22. The Ministry of Energy justified the price increase of state-subsidised fossil fuels saying that the subsidies represent an excessive burden on the state budget due to the price increase of oil and gas on the world market.

Morocco

Establishment of the Jewish community as a public corporation

The Jewish community is to be given a state-recognised organisational structure following a recommendation by Interior Minister Abdelouafi Laftit. King Mohammed VI approved this in a cabinet meeting on 20.07.22. The tasks of the three bodies to be set up are to manage the affairs of the community, maintain its intangible heritage and strengthen the ties between Moroccans of the Jewish faith living abroad and Morocco.

Myanmar

Tatmadaw soldiers confess to human rights violations

In interviews with the BBC, six deserted Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) soldiers admitted to indiscriminately torturing, raping, and killing civilians, including women and children, to quell the armed civilian uprising against the military coup of 01.02.21. Independently, interviewees reported that they were sent to villages in the Sagaing and Magway regions with orders to "shoot at anything [they] see" and to systematically loot and set fire to homes. It happened that people were burnt alive. In addition, an officer would have had girls and women arrested and then made available to be raped. They said that it had been irrelevant, whether or not the victims of military violence were members or supporters of civilian militias (People's Defence Forces, PDF). Since 01.09.21, the NGO Myanmar Witness has verified more than 200 reports of villages burnt down by the military. Together with the soldiers' testimonies, they testify to a scorched-earth policy in central Myanmar, this is where the majority is Bamar and where the Tatmadaw mainly recruited from before the coup and, also, where the largest number of PDFs are now active in the country.

Military junta executes death sentences

As announced on 03.06.22 (cf. BN of 13.06.22), the junta executed four people convicted in January 2022 on 24.07.22. According to state media, former National League of Democracy (NLD) MP Phyo Zeya Thaw and prominent democracy activist Kyaw Min Yu, who had been sentenced to death for treason and terrorism, were hanged, along with two other men, for allegedly killing a female military informant. UN experts believe that more executions could follow. Since the coup, military courts in Myanmar have sentenced at least 114 people to death.

Nicaragua

Arrests and house searches of La Prensa staff, media workers go into exile

After La Prensa reported on the expulsion of 18 nuns of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Charity, two of the newspaper's drivers were arrested on 06.07.22. On 21.07.22, the newspaper said that the arrests were followed by house searches at the homes of numerous contributors for La Prensa and a large-scale police search for its employees was initiated. In this situation several employees had left the country across the green border to seek protection, but their families continued to be harassed by security forces, the paper reported. Already on 17.07.22, the Organisation of Independent Journalists and Communicators of Nicaragua (PCIN) reported that about 15 journalists had left the country in the previous two weeks for fear of imprisonment or persecution, including at least ten staff of the newspaper La Prensa. The Fundamedios Foundation says that government repression forced about 135 media workers to work from exile and that twelve people working in the media sector are currently imprisoned.

Nigeria

Increasing number of Islamists surrender

According to official figures released by the Nigerian military on 22.07.22, the total number of Islamists who have surrendered in the northeast now amounts to 67,000. This figure cannot be independently verified. In earlier reports on the number of defectors from Islamist groups, family members of apostates had been explicitly included in the count. This was the case in March 2022, when a total of 47,975 people had been reported since September 2021 (cf. BN of 28.03.22), and in May 2022, when the number was said to have grown to a total of 53,262 (cf. BN of 30.05.22). The Nigerian government holds the view that this development is a result of the military Operation Hadin Kai (OPHK). During military operations on land and in the air, members of Islamist groups are regularly killed and their weapons and logistics destroyed. Islamists have been responsible for terrorist violence such as attacks, assaults, and kidnappings for years, especially in the northeast. As a result, more than two million people are displaced in the region (cf. BN of 21.02.22).

North-West: Criminal gangs kill 17 people

According to media reports, a total of 17 people were killed in several attacks by armed gangs in Katsina State on 19.07.22 and 20.07.22. An attack on a police station in Kankara Local Government Area (LGA) by about 300 unknown persons on motorbikes resulting in the death of five police officers caused a major stir. Further attacks resulted in casualties in several villages. Katsina is one of the states in northwestern Nigeria that have been affected more frequently by gang violence (cf. BN of 14.02.22 and 21.03.22) recently.

Niger State: Kidnap victims rescued

Security forces in Niger State succeeded in freeing 22 abducted persons on 23.07.22. This is reported by media citing information from government officials in the state in northern central Nigeria. The 22 persons abducted in Munya LGA on 22.07.22 were said to have included young children. The police and a local vigilante group were said to have cooperated in the rescue operation. Reportedly, the kidnappers fled to impassable terrain.

Efforts and successes in the fight against human trafficking

In a press release dated 19.07.22, Nigeria's National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) reported a closer partnership between the anti-trafficking task forces already in place in 21 of 36 states. In addition, task forces will be established in two more states in August 2022. Furthermore, it is intended to intensify

cooperation and the exchange of experience between NAPTIP and NGOs involved in the fight against human trafficking. In a press release, NAPTIP Director General, Dr Fatima Waziri-Azi, reported 523 convictions of perpetrators in the field of human trafficking up to now. Saying that in the year to date there had already been 25 convictions. Currently, 252 cases are pending before various courts in Nigeria. The press release said that analyses had shown that statistically 61% of Nigeria's human trafficking cases in the country had no connection to other countries, in the period 2019 to 2022. NAPTIP reports often cite the number of trafficking victims freed during rescue operations or the number of persons convicted of trafficking in a specific period (cf. BN of 25.04.22).

Russian Federation

Long prison sentences for protesting against Covid measures

On 19.07.22, the regional court in Rostov-on-Don sentenced the opera singer Vadim Cheldiyev to ten years' imprisonment. In April 2020, Cheldiyev had called for a protest against the pandemic-related restrictions on leaving one's house and their economic consequences in his home region of North Ossetia-Alania, on social media networks. According to international press reports, protesters and security forces clashed when the latter tried to break up the unauthorised rally attended by about 2,000, with the use of force. Cheldiyev was found guilty of organising mass disturbances, inciting extremist activities and of using violence against state officials (Articles 212, 280 and 318 of the Russian Criminal Code), because he allegedly hit a police officer after his arrest. His two co-defendants received prison sentences of eight and eight and a half years.

Media and human rights organisations reported that around 20 participants have so far been sentenced to prison terms of up to six and a half years in connection with the protest, and a further 65 people have been sentenced to between two and 15 days' administrative detention.

Somalia / Ethiopia

Cross-border attacks by al-Shabaab

On 20.07.22, al-Shabaab fighters attacked the villages of Yeed and Aato near the Ethiopian border in the Bakool region, killing at least 17 people, including at least three civilians and Ethiopian police, according to military sources. At least 63 al-Shabaab fighters were killed in subsequent cross-border fighting between al-Shabaab and Ethiopian forces in Ethiopia's Somali region, according to official figures. Al-Shabaab announced that at least 87 Ethiopian security forces had been killed. The incident happened only a few days after Ethiopian military had killed an al-Shabaab commander on the Ethiopian side of the border who had intended to set up an al-Shabaab group in Ethiopia. As there is a large presence of Ethiopian security forces in the Ethiopian-Somali border region, al-Shabaab only rarely stages attacks there.

Somalia

At least two dead in Afgoye explosion

In Afgoye (Lower Shabelle region), at least two civilians were killed and others injured in an explosives attack on a market. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility.

Somaliland: BBC banned from broadcasting

Somaliland's Information Minister Saleban Yusuf Ali Koore announced on 19.07.22 that the British broadcaster BBC would be banned from broadcasting, because the government accuses the BBC of bias and negative reporting on Somaliland. The ban would take effect immediately and be indefinite, he said. Earlier, BBC Somali, VOA Somali and other media organisations were reportedly suspended after being accused of not accepting Somaliland's independence that it had declared.

Sri Lanka

Wickremesinghe new president

On 20.07.22, Parliament elected Ranil Wickremesinghe, who had been acting President until then, as the new President with 134 out of 219 valid votes. He was sworn into office on 21.07.22. He is to lead the country until the end of Gotabaya Rajapaksa's remaining term in November 2024. He prevailed over Dullas Alahapperuma, long-time MP of the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), and Anura Kumara Disanayake, representative of the left-leaning Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party. Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa (Samagi Jana Balawegaya, SJB) had earlier withdrawn his candidature in favour of Alahapperuma. On 22.07.22, Dinesh Gunawardena, a long-time member of the SLPP, was sworn in as Prime Minister and 17 others as ministers. According to observers, it is questionable whether this will calm the protests. Wickremesinghe and Gunawardena are considered to be Rajapaksa's supporters and representatives of the old elites and thus of the system against which the protests are directed. However, the new president is considered one of the most experienced politicians in the country and has negotiated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) several times in the past.

Protest camp cleared by security forces

On the night of 22.07.22, hundreds of security forces forcibly cleared the main protest camp of demonstrators in front of the President's office in Colombo. The nine people that had been arrested were later released on bail. Several people were reportedly injured. The UN and representatives of several Western countries expressed concern about the violent crackdown on protesters. Just a few days earlier, protesters celebrated the 100-day protest at the Galle Face Green in Colombo, which brought about the resignation of former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa (cf. BN of 18.07.22). On 24.07.22, the President's Office announced that peaceful protests against the government were still possible in Colombo.

South Sudan

Security situation in Unity State

On 22.07.22, the rebel group South Sudan People's Movement/Army (SSPM/A) attacked the town of Mayol in Unity State killing at least twelve people. The attack targeted the seat of the County Commissioner, Chuol Gatluak. According to the group, the attack was in retaliation for previous attacks by the South Sudanese army (SSPDF) on SSPM/A positions and bases.

Among those killed is the Commissioner himself, as well as soldiers of the SSPDF, members of the police and security forces. In addition, many buildings were destroyed.

Ex-general Stephen Buay Rolnyang, who was dismissed from the army on charges of treason, founded the SSPM/A in 2021. At the time he had announced his intention to overthrow the government

Sudan

Humanitarian situation

Due to the persistently poor supply situation and the population's increasing food insecurity, the World Bank provided USD 100 million to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) on 21.07.22 at the instigation of the international community. The so-called Sudan Emergency Safety Net Project will benefit two million people in eleven states and will mainly consist of cash benefits and food shipments. The distribution of the funds is handled by the WFP itself, the project is financed by donors such as the EU, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Canada, and other states and institutions. The planned aid measures are intended to meliorate the problems caused by the poor harvest and rising food prices. However, support to the Sudanese government, which was suspended because of the military coup on 25.10.21, will not resume.

Security situation in Blue Nile State

On 20.07.22, the State Ministry of Health corrected the casualty figures for the fighting between the Hausa and Birta ethnicities (cf. BN of 18.07.22) to 105 dead and 291 injured. These figures are not conclusive, however, as more

victims are still suspected to have been buried in the rubble of destroyed buildings. About 14,000 to 17,000 people are still displaced due to the fighting.

The fighting in Blue Nile State between the two ethnic groups is causing further tensions throughout the country, according to media reports. In the aftermath of the fighting, all Hausa have been called to demonstrate for "justice for the martyrs". On 18.07.22 and 19.07.22, thousands of Hausa took to the streets in various towns, including in other states, and in some cases erected barricades. The rally in the city of Kassala escalated after protesters set fire to government buildings. At least two people were killed and ten injured in the ensuing clashes between the protesters and the security forces who attacked them.

On 21.07.22 protests were also held against the violence in Blue Nile State. In Omdurman, one protester was killed by security forces who used live ammunition to disperse the crowd. Other demonstrations, mainly organised by Hausa people, remained peaceful.

Syria

Damascus: Syrian soldiers killed by Israeli air strike

On the night of 20.07.22, three Syrian soldiers were killed and seven others wounded by an air strike on military targets near the capital. According to Syrian state media, the missiles were fired by the Israeli military on the Golan Heights. Unspecified property damage was also recorded.

Idlib: Russian air strike kills seven people, including four children

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that on 22.07.22 a house in the village of Jisr al-Shoghour was hit by a Russian air strike. Seven civilians were killed, including four children, it said. According to media reports, a Russian war plane flew attacks on five different targets in the region.

Tunisia

Vote on the Constitution - Criticism of the bill and protest rallies

On 25.07.22, the first anniversary of President Saied's assumption of power, all nine million eligible voters were called to vote on amendments to the 2014 constitution. The opposition and sections of society called for a boycott or "no" vote, criticising the bill as having been drafted without consultation and jeopardising the gains of the 2011 revolution. In addition, the UN expressed concern about the restrictions on the independence of the judiciary.

Hundreds of people demonstrated against the referendum in recent days. They fear a relapse to the time before 2011, as the new constitution strengthens the president's executive powers, because there are no control bodies. Furthermore, the armed forces will be subordinate to him and he will be empowered to appoint all judges. About ten people were arrested in clashes with the police.

Turkey

Deportation of Afghan refugees

According to the Turkish Ministry of the Interior, at least 542 Afghan refugees were deported from Turkey to Afghanistan between 23.07.22 and 24.07.22. The refugees had previously been arrested in the northwestern Turkish cities of Edirne and Kırklareli and held in deportation centres, including the Kırklareli-Pehlivan köy Removal Centre (GGM). The Migration Management Department of the Turkish Ministry of Interior announced that over 25,492 Afghan refugees have been deported from Turkey to Afghanistan on 140 charter flights since January 2022

Ukraine / Russian Federation

Development of the situation in Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced an overhaul of the staff of Ukraine's Security Service of (SBU) and had suspended its director, Ivan Bakanov, from duty already on 17.02.22. According to official statements,

Bakanov had not fulfilled his official duties properly. The Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Iryna Wenediktova, was suspended as well. The suspensions were related to a high number of criminal cases against employees of the SBU and the prosecutor's office for treason, which also gave rise to "serious questions" about the leaders, the president said. On 20.07.22, the Ukrainian Interior Ministry announced the dismantling of 45 smuggling networks from Ukraine for men of compulsory military age. In the process, 64 persons were arrested who allegedly enabled people to leave the country by using false documents or in other ways, either on foot, by swimming or by vehicles, for their own financial benefit. According to media reports, cases of corruption became known in the military recruitment centre of Odessa Oblast. Officials had issued certificates of unfitness for military service against payment of money, enabling the holders to leave the national territory unhindered.

No end to the fighting can currently be expected. Last week, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov declared that the "geographical targets" of Russian military action in Ukraine had expanded due to Western arms deliveries and held out the prospect of occupying further territories in addition to the complete conquest of the areas of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. His country was seeking the overthrow of the Ukrainian government and a change of regime, Lavrov said.

On 22.07.22, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report on war crimes committed by Russian forces in the occupied southern Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhya, including torture, unlawful detention and forced disappearances of civilians.

Venezuela

Demonstrations by public sector workers and unions against Onapre order

For weeks now, public sector workers and the various trade unions, as well as pensioners, have been protesting an order issued by the National Budget Office (Onapre), for higher wages, respect for workers' rights and the release of trade union activists arrested in early July 2022 (cf. BN of 11.07.22). The so-called "Adjustment Process of the Remuneration System of the Public Administration, Collective Agreements, Special Tables and Strategic Enterprises" approved by Onapre has been applied since the last increase in salaries in March 2022 and suspends a number of collective bargaining rights under the collective agreements concluded in August 2021 in the public sector: For example, various bonuses, including for professional experience or level of education, have been significantly reduced, resulting in some cases in a reduction of income by up to 50 %. The NGO Provea criticises the changes in the structure of the pay scales and the cuts in bonuses and benefits in the course of the nominal minimum wage increase as unlawful. Complaints have already been filed against this before the Political Administrative Chamber of the Supreme Court (TSJ).

During another such protest in Caracas on 21.07.22, yet another trade union activist was arrested and briefly detained, and a worker in the Barrio Adentro state health programme was physically assaulted. Various media outlets also reported efforts by officers of the Bolivarian National Police and officials and employees of the ruling party Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV) to prevent the demonstration.

Vietnam

Members of an independent religious community sentenced to several years in prison

A court in the southern district of Duc Hoa (Long An Province) sentenced five monks of the independent Buddhist Tinh That Bong Lai Monastery, which is used as a local orphanage, and the owner of the premises to prison terms of between five and three and a half years on 21.07.22. The sentences were handed down under Article 331 of the Criminal Code (abuse of democratic freedoms thus infringing on the State's interests). The convicts are accused of sharing false videos and content on social media that were defaming the dignity of the district's police and the Vietnamese Buddhist Church of Long An Province, among others. In recent years, the monastery reportedly gained popularity after its nuns and monks, as well as several of the orphans living there, participated in comedy and music competitions. A YouTube channel of the monastery regularly uploads self-created comedy shows and videos about life at the orphanage. In the run-up to the trial, nuns and monks of the temple had been accused of incest, fraud as well as personal enrichment by state media.

Yemen

Ceasefire

As announced on 18.07.22, the UN is pushing for a six-month extension of the current ceasefire. The current ceasefire came into effect on 02.04.22 for an initial period of two months and was extended for another two months at the beginning of June 2022; unless extended again, it will run out on 02.08.22.

The ceasefire has led to a significant decrease in fighting, but never stopped it completely. Most recently, on 23.07.22, a child was killed and ten others were injured when the Houthis shelled a residential area in the city of Taizz.

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Briefing Notes
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