



Briefing Notes

Group 62 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

05 September 2022

Afghanistan

Security situation

On 02.09.22, a mosque in Herat was targeted by a suicide attack when a prominent mullah close to the Taliban was to hold Friday prayers there. The reported death toll varied from 18 to 46 and the Taliban severely restricted reporting from the scene. No one assumed responsibility for the attack.

Border troops clashed on the Afghan-Pakistani border on 01.09.22, killing three Pakistani soldiers and injuring two Taliban fighters. The Taliban accused the Pakistani soldiers of entering Afghan territory.

Fighting between the National Resistance Front (NRF) and the Taliban continues. According to its own figures, the NRF has killed 715 Taliban fighters in the last twelve months and lost 121 of its fighters. There continue to be reports of displacements and killings of civilians and prisoners in and from the Panjshir valley.

Rapes

Several forced marriages and rapes by the Taliban have been reported. This was prompted by the publication of a video by Elaha Delawarzai, daughter of an employee of the former intelligence service, in which she declared that she had been imprisoned by the Taliban for defamation. She had accused a Taliban interior ministry spokesperson of forcing her into marriage and raping her many times.

Celebrations for the anniversary of the withdrawal of troops

On 31.08.22, the Taliban celebrated the anniversary of the withdrawal of international troops. The day was declared a national holiday and celebrations were held in several cities. In Qalat, the provincial capital of Zabul, homeowners and shopkeepers were forced to raise the Taliban flag.

Chad

Security forces arrest 84 opposition members

According to media reports, local security forces arrested 84 members of the opposition party Les Transformateurs for participating in an unauthorised assembly and disturbing public order in the Chadian capital N'Djamena on 01.09.22. The activists held this gathering to mobilise people for the meeting they planned to hold on 03.09.22. Party members informed that security forces positioned themselves in front of the party's headquarters since 02.09.22 to prevent the meeting on 03.09.22. On 04.09.22, security forces stormed the party headquarters.

Colombia

Seven policemen killed in attack

According to the National Police, seven policemen were killed in the southern province of Huila on 02.09.22. The police car was first attacked with explosives, then the policemen came under fire. One policeman was able to escape with injuries. President Petro condemned the violence and travelled with the commander of the armed forces, General Helder Giraldo, and others to a meeting of the security forces in the regional capital Neiva. Petro called for the establishment of a joint command post for regional security coordination in Neiva. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack, however, it is known that dissident groups of the Evolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) operate in Huila.

DR Congo

Kinshasa: Suppression of an A.CH protest, arrest of several journalists

UN Information Radio Okapi reported that on 29.08.2022, the police dispersed of a protest by members and sympathisers of the recently formed opposition party Alliance pour le Changement (A.CH) of the imprisoned Jean-Marc Kabund, the former close ally of President Félix Tshisekedi, in the capital Kinshasa. An A.CH party spokesperson, who pointed out that the protest had been properly registered with the relevant authorities, denounced police brutality without giving further details. The protesters demanded the enforcement of the Court of Cassation's last instance ruling of 12.08.22 to transfer Kabund, who remains in Makala Central Prison, to house arrest as requested. At the same time, they demanded the complete cessation of the prosecution, which they described as politically motivated because of Kabund's harsh criticism of the government (cf. BN of 08.08.22 and 22.08.22).

According to media reports, the Observatory for Press Freedom in Africa (Olpa) condemned the arrest of three journalists who wanted to report on this opposition protest, on 31.08.22. The police forces had arrested the journalists on the assumption that they belonged to the A.CH party and had held them temporarily in police custody. The interrogating police officers had extorted money from the journalists to ensure that they would be treated "with dignity" while in police custody.

Lualaba Province: Several human rights defenders arrested

Citing the NGO Voie Citoyenne (VOICI), Okapi reported on 02.09.22 that six human rights defenders in the Lubudi territory of the southern Congolese province of Lualaba had been arbitrarily arrested by unspecified security forces and taken into incommunicado detention. The victims include a member of civil society and the chairperson of the cultural association, Lwanzo Iwa Mikuba. The arrests were made a fortnight ago without giving any reason. The Congolese authorities in the Lubudi territory did not respond to Okapi's inquiries about these cases.

South Kivu Province, Mwenga and Uvira Territories: More internal displacement, situation of IDPs

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than 50,000 people were internally displaced between March and August 2022 in the conflict province of South Kivu alone. Recent waves of displacement due to rebel and militia violence and insecurity had been documented in parts of Uvira and Mwenga territories. The situation of the internally displaced is described as precarious. The humanitarian and security situation of the population in parts of Mwenga, Uvira and Fizi territories has repeatedly been described as critical (cf. BN of 25.10.21 and 14.02.22).

Maï-Ndombe Province: Ongoing interethnic conflict between Teke and Yaka

The media continue to report of killings, violence, burning of houses, looting and other human rights violations caused by the inter-ethnic clashes between the Teke and Yaka ethnic groups that have been ongoing for weeks in areas of Kwamouth territory in the western Congolese province of Maï-Ndombe (cf. BN of 08.08.22 and 22.08.22). According to government figures of 31.08.22, more than 30 people lost their lives so far, while local civil society estimates more than 35 dead. Six members of the security forces deployed to the region for pacification had been killed. Some non-governmental sources said security forces were responsible for extralegal killings as well as involvement in looting in some villages. The provincial authorities closed a major highway (N17) to civilian traffic

on 31.08.22 after members of an unspecified armed ethnic group set up road barriers at various points to identify members of hostile ethnic groups during systematic identity checks. Several people were killed. As a result of the inter-ethnic clashes, more than 6,000 people have already been internally displaced, according to OCHA, while civil society sources speak of more than 10,000 refugees, mainly fleeing to Bandundu (provincial capital of Kwilu) and Mongata village (Kwango province). Various sources unanimously describe the situation of the IDPs as precarious. Some sources attribute the conflicts to the increase in a customary-law levy on agricultural produce that non-Kwamouth ethnic groups, including the Yaka, but also Suku, Mbala and Songe, are required to pay to the Teke. The violent and deadly clashes are considered to result from the forced collection of these customary-law levies, which allegedly include detentions and other treatment considered to be inhumane. For their part, the Teke accuse the Yaka of making attempts to install their own tribal leaders on ancestral Teke land. The government expressed concern about an escalation of tensions and the spreading of the conflicts to surrounding regions or provinces. Civil society actors fear that the conflicts could follow a similar course as the inter-ethnic conflicts between the Ntende and Nunu ethnic groups in late December 2018 in the Yumbi territory of Mai-Ndombe province, which according to UN reports left 500 people dead and destroyed several villages.

Ethiopia

Fighting in Tigray intensifies

A week after renewed fighting between the Ethiopian army and Tigrayan militias (cf. BN of 29.08.22), the conflict has escalated. According to local media, the Ethiopian air force flew attacks on the regional capital Mekelle on 30.08.22. A residential area was reportedly hit, causing civilian casualties. In return, the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) claim territorial gains in the neighbouring southern region of Amhara. Fighting is also reported from Wolkait, Woreda (district), a disputed zone between Tigray and Amhara in the northwest of the country that is currently controlled by Amharic units. Ethiopian and Eritrean forces have launched a joint offensive against the TDF, according to TDF spokesperson Getachew. There is information of another front line in the neighbouring Wag Hemra zone in northern Amhara. A night curfew was imposed in several towns considered to be potential targets of further TDF advances, including Dessie and Kombolcha, which were already under TDF control after the last offensive in November 2021 (cf. BN of 08.11.21). Due to the tense security situation, humanitarian aid deliveries to Tigray have been suspended again. Almost 90 % of the population there are dependent on food aid. These reports cannot be independently verified as media workers have no access to the region, telecommunication networks are very limited and neither the Ethiopian nor the Eritrean governments respond to enquiries.

Dozens die in Oromia

In the regional state of Oromia in the town of Agamsa in the Woreda Amuru (Horo Guduru Welega zone, about 370 km west of the capital Addis Ababa), Amharic militias are allegedly responsible for the deaths of at least 62 civilians. According to a BBC report, members of the Fano, a group of mainly nationalist Amharic youth, targeted ethnic Oromo on 30.08.22, looted and set fire to their houses. Oromo and Amhara regularly clash in this region. The security forces are accused of withdrawing their troops and leaving the population defenceless against the militias.

The Gambia

Food and nutrition insecurity

According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the worst floods in the history of The Gambia in late July and early August 2022 exacerbate the already existing food insecurity (cf. BN of 17.01.22) as well as the country's difficult socio-economic situation. Women, children and the elderly, in particular, are facing an increased risk of food insecurity.

Iran

Death penalty: Two LGBTIQ activists sentenced to death

With reference to a Kurdish human rights organisation, foreign media reported on 04.09.22 that two LGBTIQ activists imprisoned in the central prison of Urumiyeh (West Azerbaijan province) had been sentenced to death. According to the report, the charges against both women include accusations of depravity on earth (Persian: Efsad-e fi'l-'arz), for which the death penalty is applicable according to the Iranian Penal Code. Among other things, they are accused of promoting homosexuality. Another woman imprisoned because of the same allegations has not yet been sentenced. Amnesty International (ai) informed that one of the two convicts had been in detention since the end of October 2021 because of her sexual orientation and gender identity as well as media contributions in defence of LGBTIQ rights. The woman had come under the scrutiny of Iranian authorities after giving an interview to the BBC's Persian-language channel on the situation of the LGBTIQ community. She had been living temporarily in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan in northern Iraq before her arrest and was arrested by security forces after returning to Iran (cf. BN of 31.01.22). According to reports, the woman is accused by the Revolutionary Guards' intelligence service of being the leader of a gang of human traffickers who brought girls from Iran to Iraq. She has also been accused of promoting Christianity. In an appeal to Iranian judiciary chief Ezhei, ai had called for her immediate release in January 2022.

Religious minorities: Arrests and prison sentences against Baha'i

Referring to an Iranian human rights network, it was reported on 01.09.22 that the homes of several members of the Baha'i community in the towns of Sari and Qaemshahr (Mazandaran province) had been searched by security forces. At least 14 people were arrested and temporarily taken into custody in the city of Sari. Most of them were students who had gathered privately for study and discussion purposes. According to further reports, the first-instance prison sentences against 25 members of the Baha'i faith were confirmed after appeal proceedings in Tehran.

Release of a detained hijab opponent on bail

According to media reports, the imprisoned hijab opponent Sepideh Rashno, who became known through widespread attention in social media, was released on bail on 30.08.22 after paying 800 million Toman (approx. 26,860 EUR, as of 04.09.22). The woman had been arrested on 25.07.22 after a videotaped public dispute with a hijab supporter on a Tehran bus. She was then allegedly forced to make a confession on state television. The high-profile case had led to widespread protests on social media and local gatherings of activists in Tehran. The activist was reportedly indicted on charges of assembly and conspiracy to commit crimes against the country's security and propaganda against the system.

Iraq

Escalation during protests

The protests of the supporters of Muqtada as-Sadr escalated after he declared his withdrawal from Iraqi politics on 30.08.22. For about 24 hours, fighting continued in Baghdad's "Green Zone", while as-Sadr's supporters stormed the presidential palace and engaged in firefights with supporters of other militias and security forces. The government imposed a curfew across central and southern Iraq. At least 30 people were killed. Further clashes between supporters of as-Sadr and the rival Shia pro-Iranian bloc broke out in all major cities of the Shia-dominated south. In the night of 31.08. to 01.09.22, four more people were killed in Basra in fighting between as-Sadr's peace brigades and the rival Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq. Peaceful counter-protests by thousands of Iraqis demanded the replacement of the entire political elite, including the leadership of both major Shia factions.

The situation initially calmed down after as-Sadr called on his supporters to end the violence. A three-day state mourning was announced.

Lebanon

Economic situation

On 02.09.22, the Lebanese pound fell to a new record low against the US dollar. It is currently trading at 1:35,000 on the semi-official black market. Furthermore, many government services are hardly available, as significant parts of the workforce are on largely tolerated strike and work materials can no longer be provided.

Since 30.08.22, several cities in Lebanon, including parts of the capital, have experienced major internet outages as a result of strikes in the state-owned telecommunications companies. The workers are major demanding significant wage adjustments.

Death of a Syrian refugee in custody

On 31.08.22 there was a death in custody. A Syrian man was taken into custody on charges of being a member of an IS cell and died three hours later. A video was circulated that proves that the body showed clear signs of torture. Five members of the State Security Agency were arrested on torture charges, and the public prosecutor's office is investigating. Strict anti-torture legislation has been in place in Lebanon since 2017, but allegations of the use of torture, especially in cases of suspected terrorism, remain frequent.

Mali

Jihadist groups: Agreements with the local population

According to a media report on 01.09.22, the jihadist group Katiba Serma, a member of the al-Qaeda affiliated group in support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), lifted the blockade of the town of Boni (Mopti region), which had also affected neighbouring villages and had been in place since 25.05.22. After lengthy negotiations, vehicles can now use the important supply road to Douentza. In return, the residents shall not provide any information to the Malian army or its Russian supporters and shall allow members of Katiba Serma access to the Boni market without reporting them. The Gao region will also benefit from the lifting of the blockade which had cut one of its supply routes. Allegedly the blockade of Boni was meant to punish the residents for their assumed cooperation with the army and for behaviour that, in Katiba Serma's view, does not meet Islamic standards. Katiba Serma is also convinced that violence specifically directed against members of the Peulh ethnic group had occurred.

Such agreements between community leaders and jihadist groups have increased recently, according to another media report. The report says that there have been almost 20 such agreements in the Djenné area (also in the Mopti region) since April/May 2022. The national authorities were not involved in these agreements.

MINUSMA quarterly report: Over 50 dead in military operation in Hombori

According to the report of the UN peacekeeping mission Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrée des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation Au Mali (MINUSMA) on human rights violations in the second quarter of 2022, published on 30.08.22, 317 civilians died in security-related incidents between 01.04. and 30.06.22. 73 persons are considered abducted or disappeared. Jihadist groups, namely IS in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and various factions of the JNIM, were said to be responsible for 64 % of the casualties, while the Malian army accounted for 26 %. Specifically, the army, together with foreign military personnel, is said to be responsible for the deaths of over 50 civilians in the village of Hombori (Mopti region) on 19.04.22. The forces carried out a "military clean-up" in which more than 500 people were arrested. This was preceded by the explosion of an improvised explosive device while an army convoy was passing through the town. Killings of civilians by security forces in the Mopti region have already been reported previously (cf. BN of 04.04.22 and 11.04.22).

Mali / Côte d'Ivoire

Three Ivorian female soldiers released

The 49 Ivorian security forces arrested by the Malian authorities on 10.07.22 on charges of being mercenaries (cf. BN of 29.08.22) included three female soldiers. They were released on 03.09.22 through mediation by Togo and others. Besides Togo, several other actors are involved in the mediation between Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. According

to media reports, the Malian judiciary had to agree to drop the charges against the three female soldiers in order to secure their release. Negotiations for the 46 remaining soldiers in custody are reported to continue. According to a note verbale from the UN peacekeeping mission operating in Mali, Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrée des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation Au Mali (MINUSMA), quoted by the media, the 49 Ivorian soldiers were not stationed in the actual MINUSMA contingent, but to provide security for the base of the National Support Elements (NSE) of Germany. NSE themselves are not part of the actual contingents of the countries contributing to the mission. The UN allows NSE but requires monthly reports on their numbers, according to the Note Verbale. An agency reported that Mali temporarily suspended all rotations under MINUSMA following the incident involving the 49 Ivorian forces on 14.07.22.

Montenegro

Government crisis: Former coalition parties plan formation of new coalition

According to a recent media report, the parties of the former government majority, which won the elections in August 2020 and subsequently formed a coalition until the fall of the Krivokapic government in February 2022, have agreed on the formation of a new government after a meeting of their representatives on 02.09.22. The future relaunch of the former coalition is to help the country out of the current political crisis resulting from the vote of no confidence against the now merely acting Prime Minister Abazovic of 19.08.22. The agreement was signed by members of the three party blocs "For the Future of Montenegro", "Peace is Our Nation" and "Black on White", which together hold 41 of the 81 seats in parliament. First talks on the formation of the planned new coalition are to start in the coming days.

Myanmar

New violence in Rakhine and Sagaing

In response to the Arakan Army's (AA) capture of a military camp near the Bangladesh border on 31.08.22, junta troops flew air strikes with fighter jets and helicopters in Maungdaw Township. Meanwhile, further clashes between the AA and the military occurred in Ann and Paletwa townships. In Rathedaung township, fighting had broken out inside a housing estate already on 30.08.22. At least 5,000 people fled. Since the beginning of August 2022, the above-mentioned areas in northern Rakhine and southern Chin State have repeatedly been the scene of sometimes violent clashes between the military and armed ethnic organisations.

In the central Myanmar region of Sagaing, junta troops set fire to around 50 villages in Kawlin, Kanbalu and Kyunhla townships since 22.08.22. More than 500 houses have been destroyed and at least 12 civilians killed. More than 20,000 people from 80 villages fled.

Further prison sentence for ex-government leader Suu Kyi

On 02.09.22, a military-controlled court sentenced ousted de facto head of government Aung San Suu Kyi to a further three years' imprisonment with hard labour for electoral fraud. She had previously been sentenced to a total of 17 years in prison for other offences. Also on 02.09.22, a court imposed a one-year prison sentence on former British ambassador to Myanmar and human rights activist Vicky Bowman and her husband Htein Lin, a critical artist. They were charged with violating or aiding and abetting the violation of immigration laws.

Nicaragua

Sentencing of a priest to 30 years imprisonment

Priest José Leonardo Urbina Rodríguez has been sentenced to 30 years in prison for sexually abusing a 14-year-old girl. He was found guilty in a two-day trial on 26.08.22 for which he was denied a self-selected lawyer. He will serve the prison sentence in La Modelo prison. This makes him the second clergyman convicted since June 2022. The first one was Manuel Salvador García, who was convicted of assaulting a woman in his church, although the woman later revoked her statement. Subsequently, she was also sentenced to prison for making false statements, but the sentence against the priest remained in place.

Legislative reform for the regulation and control of non-profit organisations

Due to a revision of Law N°1115 on the Regulation and Control of Non-Profit Organisations (Ley General de Regulación y Control de Organismos Sin Fines de Lucro) by Parliament at the beginning of August 2022, the legal status of organisations can now be revoked by ministerial decree of the Ministry of the Interior (Migob) without the approval of Parliament. A first decree to this effect dates from 24.08.22.

Nigeria

North-East: Further military strikes against Islamists

According to information from the Nigerian Defence Headquarters (DHQ) on 25.08.22, troops of Operation Hadin Kai (OPHK) killed a total of at least 57 fighters of Islamist groups, including high-ranking commanders, in ground and air attacks in Borno and Yobe states between 11.08 and 25.08.22. In addition, weapons were seized and arrests were made. Furthermore, 1,652 people belonging to Islamist groups or their family members surrendered to the troops within a short period of time. Four detained civilians were freed. DHQ has published similar reports in the past (cf. BN of 30.05.22). Islamists are responsible for attacks, assaults and kidnappings, especially in the northeast (cf. BN of 28.03.22).

Borno State: School enrolment programme for children displaced by Islamists

According to media reports, the Borno State government has launched a major school enrolment programme for thousands of children displaced by Islamist violence. In the first phase of the programme, some 7,000 children were reportedly enrolled in primary and secondary schools on 28.08. and 29.08.22. According to authorities, many of the beneficiaries of the programme are children orphaned by the violence in the northeast. The project is initially targeting more than 20,000 children across the state.

Pakistan

Humanitarian situation: flood disaster

The latest report of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) of 02.09.22 states that the number of houses destroyed by the floods has doubled since the previous week. 896,000 houses have been damaged or destroyed in Sindh, up from 586,000 a week earlier. In Balochistan, the number rose from 29,800 to 61,000 damaged or destroyed houses. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the number has quadrupled since mid-June 2022, with 79,000 houses damaged or destroyed. In addition, destroyed infrastructure makes it difficult to ship relief supplies and evacuate affected people. Meanwhile, 5,000 km of roads and 243 bridges have been damaged or destroyed. Rail links between Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab are also disrupted due to collapsed bridges and flooded tracks. The death toll rose to more than 1,200 people. Media reports on 04.09.22 already put the death toll at over 1,300. According to estimates, around 3.6 million hectares of farmland have been affected, of which 2.8 million hectares are in Sindh, followed by Punjab with 440,000 hectares and Balochistan with more than 300,000 hectares. Furthermore, 733,000 livestock were killed, two-thirds of them in Balochistan and almost one-third in Punjab. In addition, the water supply infrastructure has been severely damaged. In Sindh and Punjab, 50 % of the water supply is reported to have been affected, in Balochistan 30 % and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 20 %. There also remains a high risk of flooding along the Indus River from Taunsa in Punjab to Kotri in Sindh. A state of emergency has been declared in 80 districts.

According to WHO data, 116 out of 154 districts have been affected so far, most of them in Sindh followed by Balochistan. 888 health facilities have been damaged and 180 destroyed as of 28.08.22. More than 33 million people have been affected by the floods. UNHCR estimates the number of people in need of humanitarian aid to exceed 6.4 million, of which about 420,000 are refugees staying in the country. Pakistan is home to 1.3 million registered refugees from Afghanistan and other countries. The UN Secretary-General has appealed for USD 160 million in emergency aid for the flood victims in Pakistan.

Palestinian Territories / Israel

West Bank: Dead and injured in attacks on Israelis

On 02.09.22, a Palestinian wounded an Israeli army soldier with a knife, after which another soldier opened fire on him. The Palestinian Ministry of Health later confirmed the death of the attacker. The incident occurred at a military base near the city of Hebron.

On 04.09.22, Palestinians fired at an Israeli bus between Jenin and Nablus and threw a fire-bomb into the vehicle, injuring five army personnel and the bus driver. Two suspects were arrested when they tried to flee the scene, according to Israeli authorities. No organisation claimed responsibility for the attack, but a Hamas spokesperson praised the act.

Gaza Strip: Five executions carried out

On 04.09.22, the Gaza Interior Ministry announced that five Palestinians sentenced to death had been executed. Three of them died by hanging, two by firing squad. The latter were accused of spying for Israel. The former were convicted of murder, rape and robbery.

These are the first executions in the Gaza Strip since 2017.

West Bank: New visa regulations

As of 05.09.22, new regulations apply to the extension of a visa for a visit to the West Bank. One of the provisions is that foreigners must inform COGAT (a unit of the Israeli Ministry of Defence) within 30 days if they enter into a relationship with Palestinian persons registered in the West Bank during their visa stay. The status with the Palestinian Authority is also to be formalised in a timely manner by the persons concerned by submitting an appropriate form. The new provisions were adopted with some delay after repeated legal challenges. According to the provisions, the phrase "entering into a relationship" can mean that the couple concerned is either getting married, engaged or merely cohabiting.

Peru

FAO report: Food insecurity

According to a recent study by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), about half of Peru's population (16.6 million) is food insecure. This figure has doubled since the start of the COVID pandemic and is also due to mounting poverty in the country between 2019 and 2021. In 2021, poverty stood at 25.9 %, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INEI). The FAO also warns of a further deterioration of the situation due to rising food and petrol prices.

Russian Federation

Recruitment of prisoners for the Ukraine war

According to media reports, employees of the private paramilitary organisation Wagner Group, including its alleged leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, have been recruiting volunteers for the war in Ukraine in Russian prisons since the spring of 2022, and even more intensively since July 2022, promising the inmates a high monthly salary of RUB 200,000 (approx. EUR 3,350) in return, as well as early release from prison and a presidential pardon after six months of combat service. According to research by the independent Russian news portal Verstka and the prisoner aid organisation Rus Sidjashchaja ("Russia Behind Bars"), the group had visited at least 21 detention facilities in 13 regions of Russia by mid-August 2022, recruiting more than 1,000 inmates. In some cases, inmates who declined the offer after initially expressing interest were allegedly pressurized by solitary confinement and the threat of prolongation of their sentence if they continued to refuse.

Somalia

Clashes between rival clans

According to local reports, around 20 people were killed and many injured in clashes between two clans on 27. and 28.08.22. The reports cite a dispute over a quarry pond in Bengal, in the Galguduud region, as the reason for the clashes.

Targeted explosion kills one person

According to reports, the deputy district governor of Yaqshid (Benadir region), Moalim Hussein Filawayne, was killed by an explosion on the night of 30.08.22. The explosive device had been attached to his car. The Islamic State in Somalia (ISIS) claimed responsibility for the attack.

Attack in Mogadishu

On 01.09.22, mortar attacks on several residential areas killed at least three people and injured more than ten others, including women and children. The attacks reportedly took place near the seat of government. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Attacks by al-Shabaab in the central Somali regions of Hiiraan and Galguduud

On 03.09.22, at least 22 people were killed when seven vehicles carrying food near the town of Mahas (Hiiraan region) were set on fire and the travellers were shot at. According to reports, the convoy was escorted by Somali authorities and troops from the African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack. Officials said the group intensified attacks on civilians in the Hiiraan region and the neighbouring Galgaduud region in response to drone attacks by the United States Africa Command (US-AFRICOM), in which 13 al-Shabaab members were reportedly killed on 16.08 and 17.08.22, as well as to the mobilisation of local clans against al-Shabaab.

On 31.08.22, al-Shabaab members bombed local water sources and telecommunication towers in the Galguduud and Hiiraan regions, according to official reports and residents' testimony. At the same time, villages and people in rural areas near Bahdo town and in El-Adde were attacked. Both regions are severely affected by the drought and access to water was already difficult.

Sri Lanka

Gotabaya Rajapaksa returns to Sri Lanka

According to several reports, former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa returned on 02.09.22 after several weeks in exile. He had fled the country in mid-July 2022 in the wake of protests that included the storming of his residence, and had tendered his resignation from Singapore. Shortly afterwards, Ranil Wickremesinghe, who had been acting as prime minister until then, was elected president by parliament (cf. BN of 11.07.22, 18.07.22 and 25.07.22). Critical voices in the country accuse the political elite of corruption and nepotism. They hold the Rajapaksa family responsible for the severe economic crisis and demand legal action.

Economic crisis: Negotiations with the International Monetary Fund

At the end of August, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) held out the prospect of financial aid of USD 2.9 billion for the country. However, this was tied to conditions such as reforms and an agreement with creditors on debt restructuring.

South Sudan

Persistent rainfall and flooding

In some parts of the country, persistent rains and flooding continue to make the situation difficult. Maban County, in Upper Nile State, is particularly affected. As of 04.09.22, the seven people have lost their lives because of the flooding. The floods made Maban County almost inaccessible by land for the past month and therefore the county

is suffering from an increasing shortage of food and medicine. Over 200,000 people in the region have been directly affected by the floods, it is said.

Formation of joint armed forces

On 30.08.22, the first swearing-in ceremony of almost 22,000 men and women of the newly formed joint armed forces of South Sudan took place in Juba. The formation of the joint armed forces was already stipulated in the peace agreement of 2019 but had since been repeatedly postponed. It is intended to integrate former members of opposition militias or parties into the united forces, which also include of police forces and prison guards. A total strength of 83,000 people is envisaged for the united armed forces, of whom more than 50,000 are to be sworn in before the end of this year.

The formation of joint armed forces is attributed great, especially symbolic, significance both nationally and internationally, as it is intended to break up and end the affiliation to different parties or militias. After the death of more than 200 recruits of the united armed forces in various locations, the project has earned criticism right from the start. The reasons for the deaths are supply shortages of medicine and food. Equally deficient is the provision of military equipment such as uniforms or weapons.

Sudan

Protests continue

A protester was killed during protests against the military transitional government in the capital Khartoum on 31.08.22. According to the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, the person was first hit in the head by a tear gas cartridge and then run over by a security force vehicle. This brings to 117 the number of people killed by security forces since the start of the almost weekly protests.

During the protest on 31.08.22, protesters blocked the city's main street with stones and burning tyres before moving to the airport, another major target of the protests besides the presidential palace.

Persistent rainfall and flooding

According to the responsible authorities, at least 104 people have died as a result of the heavy rains and flooding. The United Nations estimates that up to 278,000 people in 15 of the 18 states have been directly affected by the floods. Currently, the states most affected by the floods are El Gedaref, Central Darfur, White Nile, South Darfur and Kassala.

Security situation in Blue Nile State

On 01.09.22, a few weeks after the fierce fighting between Hausa and Berti (cf. BN of 18.07.22), inter-communal fighting broke out again, leaving at least seven people dead and 23 injured. The latest fighting erupted in two locations in Blue Nile, the towns of al-Damazin and al-Roseires, and continued into the following day. Only the intervention of the security forces ended the violence.

The trigger for the fighting is still unknown, the responsible authorities are currently investigating. A curfew has been imposed in the two towns for the safety of the population.

Freedom of expression and press

After more than 30 years, journalists in Sudan have once again formed an independent trade union. On 27.08.22 Abdel Moniem Abu Idriss, a correspondent for Agence France Presse (AFP), was elected president of the executive committee of the new union. The last journalists' union was dissolved in 1989 at the time of the takeover by Omar al-Bashir. Subsequently, massive action was taken against media workers, especially when they criticised the regime.

Since the military coup in October 2021, journalists, as well as TV stations, newspapers and other media outlets, have come under increased pressure again. The new union says it already has over 1,000 members and wants to campaign for other aspects besides freedom of expression, such as fair and equal pay and social benefits.

Syria

Israeli attack on Aleppo airport

Syrian state media reported that the Israeli military fired rockets at the international airport near Aleppo on 31.08.22. According to the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), Israel fired four missiles at a runway and adjacent warehouses. No personal injuries have been reported. According to SOHR, the attack was probably aimed at a weapons shipment from Iran for associated militia groups in Syria and/or Lebanon.

Türkiye

Amnesty International report on pushbacks

On 31.08.22, Amnesty International (ai) published a report on illegal pushbacks and violence against Afghan refugees at the Turkish and Iranian borders, entitled "They don't treat us like humans". According to the report, both Turkish and Iranian security forces have repeatedly pushed back Afghan refugees at the borders, including by shooting at refugees. In addition, refugees who manage to enter Iran or Turkey are said to have been routinely detained arbitrarily, tortured and otherwise ill-treated before being unlawfully and forcibly returned. According to ai, of 35 interviewees who attempted to cross into Turkey, 23 came under fire. Two of the respondents suffered gunshot wounds. Also witnesses interviewed reportedly witnessed the killing of three youths and the wounding of six men and three children by Turkish security forces.

Ukraine

Development of the war effort, more in internally displaced persons

According to media reports and Ukrainian government information, Ukrainian armed forces have launched counter attacks in the Russian-occupied Kherson region. The government informed that, among others, the village of Vysokopillya in the north of the region was recaptured on 04.09.2002. The fighting continues to be most intensive in the regions of Mykolaiv, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya and Kharkiv; according to Ukrainian military sources, Russian ground advances in the Donetsk region have been repulsed. At least two people were injured in air strikes on the city of Kharkiv on the evening of 04.09.22, local authorities said.

According to a recent IOM data survey, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is currently estimated at around 6.9 million, which represents about 16 % of the total population of Ukraine. Since July, the number of internally displaced persons has increased by around 330,000, most of whom have fled the areas of eastern and southern Ukraine that were particularly affected by the war. According to the data collected, almost half of the internally displaced persons of working age are currently not receiving any income. In addition, 30 % of the internally displaced persons surveyed who are staying in rural areas have no access to medical care. With the approach of the cold season the living conditions of many IDPs is further aggravated, also because the temporary shelters are not sufficiently winterproof.

According to UN data of 29.08.22, at least 5,663 civilians have been killed and at least 8,055 injured since the beginning of the Russian attack on 24.02.22, and 268 civilian deaths have been documented in the period from 01.08 to 29.08.22. A report published on 01.09.22 by the human rights organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) describes as violations of the law of war the cases of Ukrainian nationals allegedly forcibly taken to the Russian Federation or to the areas of eastern Ukraine under Russia's control, that it has documented. These are civilians from the formerly embattled city of Mariupol as well as from the Kharkiv region, who have also been subjected to a system of compulsory screening known as filtration (cf. BN of 29.08.22).

Yemen

Killing of a judge

Houthi authorities announced that a judge of the Yemeni Supreme Court was kidnapped and killed by unknown persons in the capital Sanaa on 30.08.22. While a spokesperson for the Houthi-led Interior Ministry announced the arrest of the alleged perpetrators a few days later, the internationally recognised government blames the Houthis

for the murder, calling it a systematic targeting of members of the judiciary. According to opponents of the Houthis, at least two other judges have been victims of intimidation or disappearances in the past.

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