



Briefing Notes

Group 62 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

19 September 2022

Afghanistan

Security situation: Fighting continues in Panjshir province

Clashes between the National Resistance Front (NRF) and the Taliban continue. On 11.09.22, the Taliban are reported to have accidentally ambushed their own groups in Panjshir province, killing at least seven fighters. On 13.09.22, the Taliban moved 1,000 fighters to Panjshir and more fighters are currently reportedly being recruited in Kandahar and Helmand provinces. On 14.09.22, the Taliban, who do not usually report fighting with resistance groups, stated that they had killed 40 resistance fighters and arrested 100 in a "cleansing operation" in Panjshir province. The NRF disputed the figures. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the UN denounced these actions as war crimes because also detained civilians were killed in the process. On 15.09.22, it was reported that 35 dead Taliban fighters were transferred from Panjshir to Uruzgan and Maidan Wardak provinces.

Governance and persecution

At a press conference on 11.09.22, the Taliban-appointed Minister of Education declared that secondary schools for girls from the sixth grade onwards would remain closed. While the Taliban had previously cited organisational reasons, the education minister now pointed to cultural reasons: secondary education for girls would not be socially accepted.

On 11.09.22, the Taliban allegedly shot dead a former employee of a women's prison in Ghazni province. On 11.09.22, the Taliban accused a girl and a boy of having an extra-marital relationship and sentenced them to 39 lashes each in Ghor province. In Logar province, the Taliban allegedly beat and arrested a doctor on 11.09.22 on charges of examining a woman. The Taliban reportedly arrested two freelance journalists in Jauzjan province on 08.09.22. The background is unclear. On 12.09.22, in Kandahar province, the Taliban detained four female UN staff for several hours for allegedly not complying with dress codes. Amnesty International reported on 15.09.22 that the Taliban killed six Hazara (including a woman and a 12-year-old girl) in Ghor province during a night raid in search of a former security official (who had also been the leader of a Hazara resistance group against the Taliban).

Humanitarian situation: US establish fund for use of frozen reserves

The Biden administration has worked with Switzerland and Afghan economists to establish a new fund at the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) (Afghan Fund) to use billions of dollars of Afghan funds frozen in the US to promote economic stability in the country. President Biden decided that the reserves of the Afghan Central Bank amounting to USD 3.5 billion should only benefit the Afghan people through this fund and not end up in the hands of the Taliban. The Taliban denounced the establishment of the fund, saying it violated international norms.

Armenia / Azerbaijan

Heavy fighting

According to Armenian reports, Azerbaijani forces attacked positions near the towns of Goris, Sotk and Djermuk in Armenia in the night of 13.09.22. In these battles at least 135 soldiers were killed on the Armenian side and 71 on the Azerbaijani side until a ceasefire was announced on the evening of 14.09.22, which has lasted until the time of writing. The Azerbaijani leadership justified the attacks with alleged previous Armenian provocations. It cannot be ruled out that the authoritarian leadership in Baku is trying to put pressure on Armenia to return the entire region of Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenian name: Republic of Arzakh) to Azerbaijan. Considering that Armenia's protecting power, Russia, is currently tied down in the war with Ukraine. After the announcement of the ceasefire, protests broke out in the Armenian capital Yerevan. Thousands of protesters demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Pashinyan on the evening of 14.09.22. They accused him of giving in to Azerbaijan.

Background

Last week's clashes were the heaviest fighting since the agreement of the ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan on 09.11.20 which ended a six-week war over Nagorno-Karabakh. These battles, which resulted in more than 6,500 deaths, were brought to an end by a ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia and supervised by some 2,000 Russian soldiers. In the process, Armenia had to give up large chunks of territory that, under international law, belonged to Azerbaijan and had been occupied by Armenia since 1994.

Bangladesh

Ain o Salish Kendra: Report on assaults against women and children

According to a recent report by the Bangladeshi human rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), 641 women became victims of rape in the country between January and August 2022. 140 of them were victims of gang rape. 31 women were killed after the incidents and seven committed suicide. During the same period, 134 women were murdered by their spouses and ten were attacked with acid (for reasons such as family and/or dowry disputes, rejection). In the first eight months of the year, 770 incidents of violence against children were recorded, 392 of which were related to sexual abuse. 347 children were killed or committed suicide (some after assaults). ASK publishes statistics on various human rights violations in Bangladesh at regular intervals. The documentation is based on the evaluation of reports from nine leading national daily newspapers, various online portals and the organisation's own sources.

DR Congo

Another opposition activist charged with insulting the president

According to media reports, the Prosecutor General's Office Kinshasa-Matete filed charges against the former Minister of Relations with Parliament and now coordinator of the extra-parliamentary opposition movement Dynamique pour une sortie de crise (DYSOC), founded in August 2020, Jean-Pierre Lisanga Bonganga, for insulting the President of the Republic and spreading false rumours. The media said that the charge is based on the allegation that Bonganga made a statement in 2019 which amounted to saying that the current President Tshisekedi did not really hold power, that former presidential candidate and leader of the opposition party Engagement pour la Citoyenneté et le Développement (ECiDé), Martin Fayulu, won the 2018 presidential election and that former President Joseph Kabila dominated the "empire". Informal election results of civilian election observers had actually shown Fayulu as the clear winner of the 2018 presidential election (cf. BN of 25.10.21). Bonganga is calling the charges politically motivated because of his public support for the recent statements of Fayulu, whom he calls president. Fayulu had declared on 30.08.22 that since January 2021 each national MP has been receiving a monthly MP salary of USD 21,000 (approx. EUR 22,055, as of 19.09.22), in a country where 70% of the population is living on less than two US dollars a day. The reports further say that Bonganga's supporters fail to understand the reasons for the indictment because of a statement made years ago, especially since Bonganga nowadays officially recognises Tshisekedi as president of the DR Congo. Like Jean-Marc Kabund (cf. BN of 05.09.22), the recently arrested leader

of the Alliance pour le Changement (A.CH) party, who is also facing similar charges, Bonganga accuses the political rulers of embezzlement.

ASADHO demands release of imprisoned and convicted members of Bundu dia Mayala/Congo

In a statement dated 13.09.22, the NGO Association Africaine de Défense des Droits de l'Homme (ASADHO) expressed concern about the continued detention of 33 civilian members of the political party Bundu dia Mayala (BDM), which emerged from the political or separatist-religious movement Bundu dia Kongo (BDK) in the late 2000s. The members from the Congo-Central province had either been sentenced to death or to life imprisonment or to imprisonment for several years. The civilians, some of whom are held in the two military prisons (Angenga, Ndolo), had all been arrested for participating in public protests in various towns in Congo-Central Province in 2017, which were organised by the BDK/BDM under the leadership of former Member of Parliament Zacharias Badiengila, also known as Muanda Nsemi. ASADHO pointed out that the continued detention of this group of people was in violation of the political détente measures ordered by President Tshisekedi after taking office. ASADHO called for legal action against all officers of the National Intelligence Agency (ANR) involved in the arrests and detentions, as well as a presidential pardon for those wrongfully arrested and convicted, as has been issued in other cases since the change in the state leadership. The ANR, which served as an instrument of repression and suppression under former President Joseph Kabila, continues to be accused of maintaining practices contrary to the constitution and human rights, including the use of torture (cf. BN of 15.08.22, 11.07.22, 25.04.22 and 21.03.22).

Mai -Ndombe Province: Inter-ethnic conflict between Teke and Yaka

According to UN Information Radio Okapi, at least 30 people, including children and a village chief, were killed and several houses burnt down during renewed violent clashes in the inter-ethnic conflict between the Teke and Yaka ethnic groups in the Kwamouth territory of the western Congolese province of Mai -Ndombe (cf. BN of 05.09.22). Other sources put the death toll at up to 35. According to Kwamouth Civil Society Vice-President Martin Suta, some people were arrested, including uniformed persons. The Minister of Defence, Gilbert Kabanda Kurheng, informed on 16.09.22 that several leaders of the unrest had been arrested. The regional security situation has deteriorated since August 2022 and the ethnic conflict has intensified. An estimated 20,000 people fled to other provinces (cf. BN of 05.09.22) or abroad. Suta said that the local civil society in Kwango province counted more than 18,000 displaced people, including 285 registered unaccompanied minors.

UN: Highest rate of malnourished people worldwide

According to Bruno Lemarquis, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Humanitarian Coordinator in the DRC, the total number of undernourished people in the DRC is currently 27 million, the highest rate in the world.

Egypt

Prisoners pardoned; journalist released after two years of pre-trial detention

According to media reports, on 15.09.22, the authorities announced the release of 46 detainees from pre-trial detention in a presidential pardon. Among them is the human rights lawyer Haitham Mohamadein, who was imprisoned in May 2019 for spreading false news and membership of an illegal organisation. In the past months, the authorities had already released numerous detainees following pardons (cf. BN of 25.04.22, 02.05.22 and 30.05.22).

Al-Jazeera journalist Ahmed al-Najdi, who has been in prison since August 2020, was also released from pre-trial detention. Three of his colleagues who had been arrested between June 2019 and August 2021 for spreading false news and membership of an illegal organisation remain in pre-trial detention.

Human rights organisations estimate the number of political prisoners held in Egyptian prisons at around 60,000.

Eritrea

Mobilisation of large parts of the Eritrean population

As the BBC reported on 16.09.22, citing local sources, Eritrea is said to have mobilised citizens up to the age of 55 for the Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF). The report says that in the capital Asmara, many people had received their draft notice and had been taken to the border with Tigray within a few hours. In other parts of the country, reservists had been called to report to the local authorities. The report also says that the members of the target group are subject to increased checks to see if they are exempt from military service. The Eritrean government has not commented on the reports.

The EDF has supported the Ethiopian military in the conflict in Tigray (cf. BN of 30.11.20 and 29.03.21). Observers familiar with the situation fear that the mobilisation could aggravate the situation in the border region between Eritrea and Tigray.

Ethiopia

Several dead in air strikes in Tigray

In Mekelle, the capital of the regional state of Tigray, at least ten people were reportedly killed in air strikes. According to Tigrayan reports, the target of a first drone attack was the university's Adi Haki campus on 13.09.22. Most of the victims were reportedly killed in a second attack a day later. Another target was the regional radio station Dimtsi Woyane, the reports said.

The attacks came shortly after the Tigray government, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), declared a ceasefire and its willingness to participate in African Union (AU)-mediated peace talks with Prime Minister Abiy's government (cf. BN of 12.09.22). However, the government has so far not responded to the TPLF's proposal nor to the accusation that it is responsible for the renewed attacks.

Gabon

Release of one opposition member after serving prison sentence, arrest of another opposition member

According to media reports, Bertrand Zibi Abéghé, a former MP of the ruling Parti Démocratique Gabonais (PDG) for many decades, who switched to the opposition, was released on 13.09.22 after serving his full sentence in Libreville Central Prison. Abéghé, who supported the opposition presidential candidate Jean Ping in the disputed presidential elections on 27.08.16, had been arrested on 31.08.16 and, despite protesting his innocence, he had subsequently been convicted of several charges, including illegal possession of a firearm, disturbing public order and assault and sentenced to a total of six years' imprisonment without parole after withdrawing his initial appeal against the sentence. Abéghé, who was considered the best-known detainee in Gabon, can be called a political prisoner from the point of view of his supporters, since his prosecution and imprisonment were related to his support for the opposition candidate Ping in the 2016 presidential elections after he left the ruling party PDG. According to Abéghé, he was a victim of torture and ill-treatment during his detention.

On 17.09.22, Guy Nzouba-Ndama, leader of the opposition party Les Démocrates (LD) and president of the lower house of parliament for several years until March 2016, was arrested at a border checkpoint on arrival from Congo and taken into police custody for preliminary investigations. Judicial sources told the Agence France-Presse news agency on 18.09.22 that the arrested man was carrying undeclared cash amounting to almost two million euros. The arrest of Ndama, a former Bongo clan loyalist who was himself a presidential contender in 2016 and later backed opposition candidate Ping, comes ten months before presidential elections scheduled for August 2023, for which Ndama is considered a potential candidate.

Guinea-Bissau

PAIGC Chairperson may leave the country

According to media reports, the leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Domingos Simões Pereira, travelled to Portugal on 06.09.22. A source from the Attorney General's Office confirmed the authorisation for him leave the country. Pereira had been subject to an exit ban because of investigations against him related to his time as prime minister (cf. BN of 28.02.22). On 10.08.22, the Court of Appeal issued an order lifting the travel restriction. However, on 02.09.22 Pereira was still prevented from entering Osvaldo Vieira International Airport.

Dismissal of 1,500 health workers

By decree of 01.09.22, the Minister of Health dismissed a total of 1,500 health workers, including doctors, who had been hired under his predecessor between January and April 2021. This was reported by some media, while others talked of suspensions. The reason given for the dismissals was that the advertisement of the posts had not met the legal criteria. According to an agency report, as recently as 31.08.22, 177 health workers were ordered to return by the end of the year under threat of sanctions; they are said to have exceeded the authorised period of two years for a training period abroad. On 25.08.22, the government imposed a hiring freeze in the education and health sectors to stop the increase in the country's wage bill, citing commitments made to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A federation of trade unions from both sectors presented demands to the government on 13.09.22 in response to the measures. Strikes continue in both the education and health sectors (cf. BN of 09.08.21 and 20.09.21).

Guinea

Crackdown on black market for medicines

According to media reports, a deadline set by the authorities for traders without a licence to stop selling medicines ran out on 15.09.22. The Gendarmerie Nationale monitors the implementation, especially at markets. The measure is primarily intended to curb the spread of counterfeit preparations. The purchase of medicines on informal markets is considered widespread, also because of lower prices. According to the Ministry of Health, the country's central pharmacy ordered enough medicines in advance to be able to distribute them throughout the country.

Lawsuit against interim president Doumbouya in France

The Front National pour la Défense de la Constitution (FNDC) and relatives of those killed in the July and August 2022 protests (cf. BN of 01.08.22 and 22.08.22) have filed a lawsuit against junta leader and interim president Mamadi Doumbouya in Paris. They accuse him of aiding and abetting murder and torture. Doumbouya is said to hold French citizenship as well. According to further media reports, lawsuits before Guinean courts have so far yielded no results.

Haiti

Unrest increases

After the Ministry of Culture and Communication's announcement to cut fuel subsidies on its Twitter channel on 13.09.22, riots broke out in several cities. According to media reports, several people were killed and injured by firearms during the violent protests and looting. The wounded included three national police officers and two media workers in Port-au-Prince. In addition, a United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse containing 1,400 tonnes of food was looted in the city of Gonaïves on 15.09.22, roadblocks were set up across the country and several embassies were closed. In addition, difficulties of the water supply are reported in Port-au-Prince. The country is suffering from a long-lasting economic crisis, including an inflation rate of 30.5 % in July 2022, as well as increasing violence by armed gangs.

Iran

Protests after death of woman in police custody

According to press reports, the death of a 22-year-old woman from Saqqez (Kurdistan province) a few days after her arrest triggered a large number of protests. Street protests were held in Saqqez and the provincial capital Sanadaj as well as in Tehran and security forces intervened. On 17.09.22, following the woman's funeral in Saqqez, a protest march of several hundred people formed, which security forces broke up, sometimes using tear gas. According to unconfirmed reports, warning shots were fired and at least five participants were injured. Outrage also erupted in the social media, and the case was taken up critically in some Iranian newspapers. According to media reports, considerable restrictions on internet connectivity were registered in the course of protest actions in Tehran.

The woman was allegedly injured in the head after being arrested by the morality police on 13.09.22 during a visit to Tehran and died in a local hospital on 15.09.22. Foreign media, citing information from her brother, reported that she had been taken to a pre-detention facility for disobeying dress regulations. She then suffered head injuries there and fell into a coma. The official statement of the Tehran authorities, however, was that the woman had been taken into custody for instructional purposes and had suffered a heart attack in the process. President Ebrahim Raisi ordered the Interior Ministry to investigate the case. Several members of parliament demanded the release of police videos for the investigation.

Iraq

Start of fuel oil distribution in the KRG

Distribution of heating oil at heavily subsidised prices will begin in October 2022 in the Kurdistan Autonomous Region (KRG), this was announced by the Minister of Natural Resources. The KRG regularly offers households heating oil at about half the market price during the winter months. Due to this year's very high prices, it is still unclear whether this will be possible again. As a cold winter is expected, the demand is set to be more than twice as high as last year.

Arbaeen

The Arbaeen pilgrimage from Najaf to Karbala, one of the largest pilgrimages in the world, ended on 17.09.22 with an estimated 21 million participants, the majority of the foreign pilgrims among them, about three million, came from Iran. Despite the still fragile security situation, there were no major incidents and the pilgrimage was generally peaceful.

Turkey-PKK conflict

On 11.09.22, the Turkish Ministry of Defence announced that four Turkish soldiers had been killed in fighting in northern Iraq the previous week during the ongoing military operation against the PKK.

Jordan

HRW: Human rights organisation deplors restrictive treatment of political opposition

On 18.09.22, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released information on the practices of numerous Jordanian authorities, which it found to be increasingly restrictive against the peaceful political opposition over the past four years. Authorities would use vaguely worded laws to detain, question and harass media workers, activists, members of political parties and independent trade unions, as well as their family members, the report said. In addition, basic rights to work or travel were restricted, HRW said.

Cameroon

Attack on Catholic Church in Anglophone Southwest Region

On 16.09.22, unknown armed assailants allegedly set fire to St Mary Catholic Church in Nchang village (Southwest Region) and abducted five priests, a nun and two worshippers. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack. Attacks are often carried out by separatist groups demanding ransom for the hostages.

Kyrgyzstan / Tajikistan

Heavy fighting claims many lives

On 16.09.22 fierce fighting flared up again in the 30-year long dispute over the border between the two former Soviet republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Central Asia. One focus of the fighting was around the Kyrgyz border town of Batken. Both states accused each other of shelling and using heavy weapons. Heavy artillery, attack helicopters and drones were reportedly used in the region. The Kyrgyz Ministry of Health has so far reported at least 46 casualties and around 140 injured. On the Kyrgyz side, about 137,000 people had to be taken to safety, according to the civil defence agency. The government in authoritarian Tajikistan put the death toll at 35. According to both sides, the situation on the disputed border remains extremely tense.

Lebanon

Economic situation

On 16.09.22, the adoption of a state budget for 2022 was again adjourned after several opposition MPs left the session, preventing the quorum from being met.

Wave of extraordinary bank robberies

Between 12.09 and 16.09.22, at least seven (five on 16.09.22 alone) bank branches in Lebanon were attacked by customers demanding their own US dollar savings, frozen since 2019, sometimes taking hostages and threatening bank employees with weapons. Most, but not all, of the perpetrators are middle-aged men with relatively large bank balances ranging from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of US dollars, who are unable to pay for such things as life-saving operations by relatives, debts or their livelihood due to the crisis. In all cases, crowds gathered in front of the banks supporting the perpetrators; the security forces took a non-violent approach each time. In most cases, the perpetrators were paid at least part of their money, and all subsequently surrendered to the police without resisting.

On 16.09.22, the banking sector announced a three-day strike over the incidents. An activist group announced the storming of further banks.

Mali

Civilians killed in the northeast

According to media reports, jihadists attacked the town of Talataye in northeastern Mali on 06.09.22. In subsequent fighting between jihadists and other armed groups, at least 30 civilians are said to have been killed; other sources put the death toll at 50 casualties at least. In addition, shops were looted and food supplies burnt. As a result of the violence, several thousand residents fled Talataye.

Morocco

Prison sentence for insulting Islam upheld by appeal court

The sentence of two years imprisonment against blogger Fatima Karim for insulting Islam handed down on 17.08.22 (cf. BN of 22.08.22), was upheld by the Court of Appeal. She had apologised after the sentencing, saying that she had not wanted to hurt anyone with her comments and had not wanted to undermine/insult the state religion.

Mauritania / Morocco

Two dead in drone attack

According to unconfirmed international media reports, two Mauritians were killed and a third one injured by a Moroccan drone attack while searching for gold in the southeast of Western Sahara on the border with Mauritania. Reports also differ on the location of the incident. The Alakhbar agency reports that, according to official Mauritanian sources, the incident took place on Mauritanian territory. There have been no official statements on the incident so far.

Myanmar

HRW: Allegations of torture against military junta

In a report published on 13.09.22, the human rights organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused the military junta in Myanmar of torture and responsibility for the deaths of numerous detained activists and critics since the military coup of 01.02.21. HRW documented six cases of men who died between May and July 2022 after being detained by the military junta in Yangon, Mandalay and Sagaing. The report says that five of them died already within 24 hours of arrest or interrogation. The organisation describes these cases as merely the tip of the iceberg and says that no action appears to be being taken to investigate deaths in custody and to hold those responsible to account. Referring to estimates by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), it states that at least 73 people have died in police or military custody since the coup. In total, at least 690 people have died shortly after their arrest, often in connection with military operations in ethnic minority areas. Fear of repression, however, meant that few relatives made the cases public. The few deaths in custody confirmed by the junta were attributed to illness and heart failure. HRW's interviews with relatives and witnesses, reports and sources (including photos, videos, independent medical analyses) suggest that many died as a result of torture, poor detention conditions or lack of access to adequate medical care. Some of the corpses of the documented cases showed signs of torture such as severe bruising, deep wounds, scalded skin and body parts burnt by chemicals, and missing teeth. According to HRW's assessment, the abuses committed by the military since the coup in February 2021 constitute crimes against humanity.

Fighting in several parts of the country, further violence in Rakhine

Armed clashes between junta troops and various armed ethnic organisations as well as People's Defence Forces (PDF) allied with them continue in several parts of the country. Between 06.09. and 12.09.22, fighting involving air strikes and artillery fire was reported in the regions of East Bago, Tanintharyi as well as Kayin State and southern Shan State. Fighting between the military and the Arakan Army (AA) also continued in Rakhine State and southern Chin State. On 15.09.22, the AA succeeded in capturing a military base in Maungdaw Township near the border with Bangladesh after fighting. According to reports, the AA currently controls several military bases in Maungdaw as well as in Paletwa Township (Chin State). On 16.09.22, a young man was killed and several people were injured in Bangladesh by a grenade attack from Myanmar. According to reports, around 4,000 Rohingya people have been living in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area, which has been described as a no-man's land, since 2017.

Nicaragua

Political repression: References to kin liability, entry bans

In the past two weeks, various NGOs and media reported that several politically active persons, in particular members of the Unamos (Unión Democrática Renovadora) party, and in some cases their relatives, had been arrested as part of political repression. More detailed information on the individual cases is not known. Two French-Nicaraguan dual nationals are also said to be among those arrested. The latter two are said to have been detained at the Directorate for Legal Assistance in Managua (Dirección de Auxilio Judicial) in the place of their politically active father, who could not be found as he had previously left the country to apply for international protection.

In addition, it is reported that at least one cleric and one human rights defender have been denied entry to Nicaragua in recent weeks after short-term stays abroad, presumably because of previous opposition activity or support for it.

Nigeria

Kaduna and Zamfara State: Counter-terrorism

On 12.09. and 13.09.22, military units in the state were able to free a total of 16 kidnapping victims in Chikun and Igabi local government areas and to destroy several hideouts of terrorist groups. Several terrorists were also killed in the process.

On 17.09.22, at least twelve fighters of Bello Turji, the leader of a group classified as terrorist, were killed in an attack by the Nigerian Air Force. The attack took place in the Shinkafi Area of Zamfara State. Turji himself, however, was not at the scene and is therefore still alive. According to further reports, terrorist or criminal groups have been targeted by such attacks since 14.09.22.

Borno, Yobe, Adamawa State: Floods

According to a report by the NGO Save the Children, a total of 150,000 people in Niger and northern Nigeria are directly affected by floods. About 50,000 of the affected people live in Nigeria, 100,000 in Niger. In addition, more than 300 people have already been killed by floods in Nigeria this year.

Katsina State: Abductions

armed assailants abducted at least 50 people from a village in the northwest of Katsina State. Although security forces intervened and engaged in firefights with the kidnapers, the abducted persons could not be freed. According to the authorities, an intensive search for the kidnapers and their victims continues.

Pakistan

UNHCR provides humanitarian aid for flood victims

By mid-September 2022 the flood disaster had claimed more than 1,400 lives. An estimated 33 million people have been affected due to the destruction of infrastructure (cf. BN of 05.09.22). In addition, about one million people lost their shelter. With the support of the UNHCR, some 800,000 people have been housed in temporary shelters in more than 40 disaster-affected districts. UNHCR also delivered 950,000 of the 1.2 million of planned life-saving relief items and provided cash assistance equivalent to USD 190 to 100 families in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which will also be provided to another 120 families in Punjab and Balochistan provinces.

TTP attack and fighting in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

On 13.09.22, a car bomb planted by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) killed eight people in Swat district. The attack targeted the head of a pro-government citizens' militia, who was killed along with two bodyguards, two policemen and three uninvolved civilian passers-by. In the past, vigilante groups had formed in the former tribal areas, with the support of the Pakistani government, to defend the villages against attacks by radical Islamic groups. However, after the security situation improved, most of these citizen militias disbanded. On the same day, three soldiers were killed in a clash between the Pakistani military and TTP fighters in Kurram district on the Afghan border.

Palestinian Territories / Israel

West Bank: Israeli soldier and two armed Palestinians killed

On 14.09.22, an Israeli soldier was killed by two armed Palestinians near the border with Israel near Jenin in the north of the West Bank. Military personnel had stopped the two men near the border, whereupon they opened fire and killed the soldier. The soldier's unit returned fire and killed the two gunmen. The Jenin Brigade, an association of armed groups, announced that the two men killed had been its members.

After the incident, the Israeli Prime Minister, Yair Lapid, said that one of the men was a Palestinian Authority intelligence officer.

Serbia

LGBTIQ community protests at first Europride parade under police protection

According to media reports, about 1,000 people took part in the Europride parade for the rights of the LGBTIQ community on 17.09.22 in Belgrade. The route was protected by a corridor cordoned off by police officers in order to keep the smaller number of far-right and ultra-clerical counter-protesters at a distance. Ten police officers were lightly injured in clashes between police and counter-demonstrators and more than 60 arrests were made, the reports said. Head of government Ana Brnabic, the first openly homosexual head of government in the country, praised the security authorities for their approach. The Europride event, which had been awarded to a south-eastern European country for the first time, could only take place after EU representatives intervened and agreed on a shortened route, as the authorities had initially banned the event.

Somalia

Hiiraan: SNA recaptures villages from al-Shabaab, landmine attack

Somali National Army (SNA) troops, supported by armed villagers, reportedly drove al-Shabaab out of several villages near the town of Bula-Burde in the Hiiraan region between 16.09. and 18.09.22. According to official reports, at least 30 al-Shabaab fighters were killed and five SNA soldiers were injured. The SNA intensified its operation against al-Shabaab in the region in recent weeks, mobilising locals after al-Shabaab attacked local water sources and telecommunications towers (cf. BN of 05.09.22).

During the fighting, al-Shabaab also planted a landmine on a road in Bula-Burde on 16.09.22. Four people died in the mine's explosion, including two prominent clan elders, according to media reports.

Sudan

Renewed protests

On 14.09.22, at least 70 people were injured in the capital Khartoum and at least four in the sister city Omdurman during renewed protests under the slogan "March of Millions". The protest march in Khartoum was again moving towards the presidential palace and was stopped shortly before getting there by the massive use of tear gas and rubber bullets. Injured people who were treated by mobile teams already on the streets are not included in these figures. In addition, numerous arrests were made. Smaller protests had already been held on the day before and several people were wounded by the security forces' actions. In addition, on 13.09.22, units of the military, the security police and the paramilitary central reserve police (aka Abu Teira) indiscriminately attacked young people, beating and robbing them. In some cases, the forces forcibly shaved people's heads. The NGO Emergency Lawyers condemned this procedure as systematic and deliberately humiliating actions, degrading and violating the human dignity of the demonstrating youth. The NGO also called for all cases to be reported so that they can be documented. Similar actions by the security forces had been reported from Khartoum North at the end of August 2022.

Poor economic situation

As a result of the military coup in October 2021, the government of Sudan lost more than four billion USD in international aid funds as a consequence of international sanctions, thus the budget is extremely strained. The Ministry of Finance does not expect any external support for 2023 either.

The sharp decline in exports, rising inflation and permanently low wages are just as concerning. Some workers, for example medical staff, have not received any or only sporadic wage payments for several months. The forecasts for the future poverty rate are repeatedly adjusted downwards.

In order to improve state revenues, the military government also raised taxes thereby triggering more strikes. Strikes are often organised across sectors and across the country and directed against non-payment of wages, poor

infrastructure and broken political promises to improve the situation. Public sector workers in the North Darfur region have been on strike for two months. They are demanding compliance with a wage adjustment for the year 2022, which is supposed to compensate for ever-increasing inflation. However, the agreed adjustment has not yet been implemented, which is why public sector workers in South Kordofan also went on strike a fortnight ago.

Most recently, junior doctors across the country went on strike for three days on 14.09.22 because they had not been paid their salaries for eight months. Previous demands to the Ministry of Health and a threat to strike had gone unanswered.

Recently, also workers in the energy and utilities sector went on strike over the failure to implement previously agreed wage adjustments for 2022.

Employees of the Sudan Radio and Television Corporation, the state television station, have been on strike since 15.09.22.

Persistent rainfall and flooding

The persistent heavy rains and floods have claimed the lives of 134 people by now. Meanwhile, a state of emergency has been declared in six of the 18 states. These are: Al Gezira, Kassala, River Nile, South Darfur, West Kordofan and White Nile State. Most people died in North Kordofan State, with most houses destroyed in the southern part of White Nile State.

Syria

Deir ez-Zor: IS kills six SDF soldiers

The Islamic State group killed six members of the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces after their fighters had captured them near the village of Ruwaished in Deir ez-Zor governorate on 12.09.22. According to a news agency linked to IS, this was supposedly in retaliation for the military offensive in al-Hol camp (cf. BN of 12.09.22).

Health system: Cholera outbreak

On 12.09.22, Syrian authorities announced that hospitals in the capital Damascus had been put on heightened alert after more than 20 cholera cases and at least five cholera deaths were recorded in the governorates of Aleppo, Latakia and Deir ez-Zor. The areas under SDF control in the northeast also recorded three deaths and further cases of cholera. According to initial UN investigations, the cause of the outbreak is most likely polluted water from the Euphrates River. This water is used for drinking, but also for irrigating fields, which in turn leads to the contamination of the food grown there. Syria's infrastructure has been severely damaged by the conflict, therefore large parts of the Syrian population have no secure access to clean drinking water.

Damascus: Israeli air strike on airport kills five soldiers

A new Israeli air strike on targets near Damascus airport killed five Syrian government soldiers and two members of Iranian-backed groups on 16.09.22, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. According to official sources, most of the missiles were intercepted by the air defence system. An air strike on targets at the airport had already damaged infrastructure in June 2022, causing a two-week closure, which also affected humanitarian aid.

al-Hol: Offensive ended after more than three weeks

On 17.09.22, the Internal Security Forces announced the end of a large-scale campaign in cooperation with SDF forces and the US-led coalition against IS sleeper cells in al-Hol camp. During the 24-day offensive, the soldiers arrested dozens of extremists, confiscated weapons and liberated two Yazidi and four non-Yazidi women who were being held in the camp.

Two members of the security forces were killed by extremists' resistance during the campaign.

Tanzania

Government warns against distribution of content related to same-sex relationships

The Tanzanian Ministry of Information warned the public against posting content on social media that suggests and promotes same-sex relationships. Accordingly, the dissemination of messages, images and videos promoting

homosexuality is prohibited the government stressed with reference to the criminalisation of homosexual acts as well as the Anti-Pornography Act.

Tunisia

New electoral law weakens the role of political parties

Three months before the parliamentary elections in December 2022, the authorities enacted a new electoral law on 15.09.22, as is reported by the media. Under the new law, the number of MPs in the lower house will be reduced from 217 to 161 and candidates will be elected directly rather than through party lists, this change will limit the role of parties in parliament.

Türkiye

Anti-LGBTIQ protest

On 18.09.22 an anti-LGBTIQ protest was held in Istanbul. Several thousand people participated in the protest called "The Big Family Gathering". According to media reports, it was the largest protest of its kind in Türkiye. An anti-LGBTIQ group that organised the protest called for the closure of LGBTIQ associations and the banning of their activities, citing family values. According to the organisers, more than 150,000 signatures had been collected to urge the Turkish parliament to pass a law banning LGBTIQ propaganda disseminated in the media.

Ukraine

Development of the war, corpses found in Izyum

According to media reports, most of Kharkiv oblast has been recaptured by Ukrainian forces during the ongoing Ukrainian counter-offensive. Furthermore, the think tank Institute for the Study of War as of 17.09.22 reports territorial gains east of the strategically important Oskil River. Meanwhile, according to Ukrainian sources, several of the most recently recaptured towns are under massive Russian artillery fire, including Kupiansk, Chuhuiv and Izyum, with several civilians killed and residential and commercial buildings destroyed. The British Ministry of Defence informed that Russian attacks on civilian targets have increased significantly across the country since 11.09.22.

On 15.09.22, more than 440 graves were discovered in a wooded area near the town of Izyum. According to Ukrainian government sources, some of the mostly civilian victims died from artillery fire and air strikes; others had been shot or starved to death. In some cases, there were signs of the use of torture; the UN Human Rights Office announced that it would send an observation team to the region. Ukrainian authorities reported that during the recapture they found ten facilities where torture, including electrocution, had taken place, in addition to Izyum also in the towns of Vovchansk and Balakliya.

Criminal prosecution for collaboration

According to a report by the independent Russian news portal Meduza, since the beginning of the war, 1,325 criminal proceedings have been initiated by the Ukrainian authorities for collaboration with Russia or the respective Russian-appointed occupation administration, and in 75 cases there have been convictions so far. In most cases, bans on holding public office were imposed instead of prison sentences, on average for a period of ten years.

Since the law was amended in March 2022, various forms of cooperation with a state classified as an aggressor are punishable, including economic exchange with the state in question, the voluntary assumption of a post in authorities created by the state in the occupied territory and the dissemination of propaganda favourable to the aggressor in educational institutions. The range of punishment often extends to prison sentences of several years.

Yemen

Reform backlog blocks financial aid

Disagreements within the presidential council of the internationally recognised government have so far prevented urgently needed reforms, including in the financial sector and in the fight against corruption. At the same time, the above-mentioned reforms are a prerequisite for the release of financial aid in the amount of three billion USD, which was promised by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in April 2022 (cf. BN of 11.04.22).

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