

Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

10 October 2022

Afghanistan

Security situation: Attacks in Kabul, fighting in Takhar und Badakhshan

According to reports in the media, a bomb attack took place on a Shiite educational institute in West Kabul on 30.09.22 while 300 pupils were preparing for the Kankor examination (for admission to university). According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 53 people (including 46 girls) were killed and 110 people were injured. No-one has claimed responsibility for the attacks to date. In the wake of the attack on 30.09.22 there have been protests in various provinces (Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Bamiyan), primarily by women protesting for their right to education. The Taliban have used force to stop these protests. 05.10.22 witnessed a further bomb attack on a mosque on the site of the interior ministry in Kabul. According to local news portal Hasht-e Subh, two people were killed and 18 injured. On 08.10.22 an explosive device detonated next to a minibus in Kabul, injuring three people.

There are media reports of continued fighting between the National Resistance Front (NRF) and the Taliban in Takhar and Badakhshan provinces. According to reports in the media, on 03.10.22 the NRF recaptured a district (Shekay in Badakhshan province) for the first time since the Taliban assumed power - although the Taliban had deployed new troops to the district on 30.09.22. The Taliban reportedly suffered losses in the fighting. Current defence minister Mullah Yaqub subsequently travelled to Badakhshan on 03.10.22 to set up a new military unit. Hasht-e Subh reports that a number of Taliban were killed by the NRF in Takhar province on 29.09 and 05.10.22. On 06.10.22 the Taliban called on 400 residents of the district of Khwaja Bahauddin to leave the region.

Governance

On 27.09.22 the UN Secretary-General's deputy special representative for Afghanistan, Markus Potzel, reported to the UN Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan. He said that many in the international community were losing patience regarding the prospect of a joint strategy with the Taliban because, while the Taliban had made some positive progress, this was clearly outweighed by negative developments. Key factors here are above all the continuing closure of girls' schools, the lack of protection for the population (above all Shiites) against attacks by Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) and also the former presence of killed Al Qaeda leader Al-Awahiri in the heart of Kabul.

The ministry of communication and information technology blocked the website of the critical news portal Hasht-e Subh on 03.10.22 on the grounds that it had maligned the government and spread fake news. It has relocated to a new server abroad and is now accessible at www.8am.media/eng.

Humanitarian and economic situation

According to the above-stated report, the economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains precarious. While the Taliban claim to have boosted exports, maintained the value of the Afghan currency and generated sound revenue, per capita income has reportedly dropped to the level of 2007, thus wiping out 15 years of economic growth. The report adds that financing under the United Nations' Humanitarian Response Plan is also uncertain.

Only US\$ 1.9 bn of the required US\$ 4.4 bn has been provided to date. The report points out that such a funding shortfall is particularly alarming in view of the growing needs and the deteriorating food situation, with winter fast approaching once again. While acknowledging that the Afghan Fund has been set up by the United States, providing for half of Afghan reserves to the sum of seven billion US dollars to be deposited in a Swiss bank account, from where it is to be used to stabilise Afghan's macro-economy, the report points out that this represents a temporary measure. The report observes that the humanitarian and economic measures do not meet the longer-term needs of the Afghan people, concluding that humanitarian aid alone can neither replace vital supply systems such as healthcare and water nor prevent economic collapse.

Algeria

Caritas discontinuing its work in Algeria with effect from 01.10.22

Caritas is ending its work in Algeria with effect from 01.10.22, by order of the Algerian authorities. The Algerian authorities emphasize that Caritas is a non-approved foreign NGO and is involved in illegal activities. The government has yet to present any legal grounds.

Bangladesh

Application of the Digital Security Act against religious minorities

Media reports cite at least seven cases in 2022 in which members of the Hindu minority have been fined or imprisoned for offending Muslims' religious feelings in accordance with the Digital Security Act (DSA) which was passed in 2018. In addition to restricting freedom of speech and religious freedom, the provisions of the DSA also establish blasphemy as a de facto culpable offence. While the religious offences specified in Bangladesh's criminal code, in particular Sections 295A and 298, are punishable by up to two years' imprisonment and a fine, the provisions of the DSA, in particular Article 28, enable more severe prison terms of up to seven years for an initial instance of comments classified as blasphemous in digital media and up to ten years' imprisonment for any subsequent instances.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Presidential and parliamentary elections

Ballots for the two chambers of parliament and the three-person state presidency were held at national level on 02.10.22. The regional MPs were also elected in Republika Srpska, together with the president and his two deputies. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), elections took place for the bicameral parliament, which is to appoint a president and two vice-presidents in the coming weeks. The electorate also voted on the assemblies of the Federation's ten cantons. The nationalist parties remained the strongest forces in both entities. In contrast, in the contest for the Bosniak seat within the national presidency social democrat Denis Bećirović defeated Bakir Izetbegović from the ruling national conservative Party of Democratic Action (SDA). Christian Schmidt, the high representative of the international community, imposed a number of amendments to the Federation's constitution and its electoral law by decree in the course of election day. These include procedural changes relating to the election of FBiH's president and two vice-presidents, an increase in the number of MPs in the Federation's parliament and a shortening of the time to be allowed for forming a new government. According to Schmidt, these changes are intended to ensure swift implementation of the election results and to end the stonewalling by the nationalist parties which has been evident in the past.

Sanctions against prime minister

The US Treasury Department announced on 03.10.22 that it had imposed sanctions against the prime minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Fadil Novalić (SDA). The authorities accuse the politician of having misused pensioners' data for the benefit of his own party during the 2018 elections. They claim that Novalić used these data to send the individuals concerned letters in which he enumerated his political achievements and promised higher pensions. As a result of the sanctions, all assets and stakes in assets of Novalić which are located

in the United States or in the possession or under the control of US citizens are now frozen and must be reported to the US Treasury Department.

Brazil

Presidential election: Lula wins first round

According to the supreme electoral tribunal (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral), former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva won the first round of the presidential elections on 02.10.22, claiming 48.42 % of the vote. The incumbent Jair Messias Bolsonaro polled 43.21 %. As no candidate won more than 50 % of votes cast, a run-off will be held on 30.10.22. In addition to the presidential election, gubernatorial and parliamentary elections also took place. Bolsonaro's Partido Liberal party will be the largest party in parliament in future, with 99 of the 512 seats in the house. More than 156 million people were called upon to cast their votes. Turnout stood at 79 %.

Burkina Faso

Military junta appoints coup leader Traoré as president of Burkina Faso

An official statement has been released confirming that military officer captain Ibrahim Traoré was instated as the country's president on 05.10.22, following the second coup in the west African country in the space of less than nine months. In the initial coup, Lieutenant-colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba assumed power in January 2022. On 30.09.22 he was overthrown by a group of junior officers led by Traoré, however. The second military coup has come about primarily as a result of the failure to defeat an Islamist uprising. The government has been fighting jihadist groups for seven years. Announcing their takeover of power on national television, the putchists accused lieutenant-colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba of having failed to prevent jihadists attacks in the country. According to press reports, Damiba fled to Togo at the beginning of October 2022, following two days of fighting. Military interventions are no rare occurrence in Burkina Faso. The country has experienced seven military coups since it gained independence from France in 1960.

Chad

Political transition phase extended by two years

In accordance with the resolution announced by the national dialogue forum on 01.10.22, the political transition phase which began when the military assumed power in April 2021 and which was to end in October 2022 is to be extended by a further two years. Presidential and parliamentary elections will then not be held until October 2024. Until then, the country's current president and chairman of the transitional military council (CMT), Mahamat Idriss Déby, is to remain in office and will lead a transitional government which he is to appoint. In the meantime, the CMT is to be dissolved. Large proportions of the opposition, civil society and a number of important rebel groups rejected the forum's resolution as dictatorial. The national dialogue, which began on 20.08.22 and involves more than 1,400 participants from the spheres of politics, civil society, opposition parties and rebel groups, was intended to end a phase of political transition in the central African country by elaborating a new constitution and ultimately culminating in democratic elections.

China

Hong Kong: Minors convicted for first time under national security law

On 08.10.22 a court in Hong Kong sentenced four minors aged between 16 and 18 and a 19 year-old woman to three years at a training centre under the national security law. The convicted individuals, who were members of the pro-independence group Returning Valiant, pleaded guilty to the subversion of state power. They are alleged to have called for a "bloody revolution" in social media and at street stalls. Four of the convicted had already been in custody for over a year, prior to the sentencing.

Colombia / Venezuela

Resumption of peace negotiations between ELN and government

On 04.10.22 delegates of the Colombian government and the National Liberation Army guerilla group (ELN) agreed to resume the peace talks which were suspended in 2019. A corresponding declaration, signed by ELN commanders António García and Pablo Beltrán and Colombia's high peace commissioner, Danilo Rueda, was presented at a press conference in the Venezuelan capital, Caracas. Negotiations are to resume at the beginning of November 2022 with the support of Norway, Cuba and Venezuela. Rueda, who travelled to Cuba within days of president Gustavo Petro's inauguration to conduct exploratory talks with an ELN delegation (cf. BN of 22.08.22), stated that the recent release of hostages and the decline in attacks by the ELN had brought about a new atmosphere of trust. Asked about a possible bilateral ceasefire, Rueda replied that the parties were still in the process of building trust.

Cuba

Referendum: Majority vote in favour of new family law

On 02.10.22 67 % of the electorate voted in favour of the reform of the family law of 1975. In all, around 6.25 million of Cuba's total electorate of just under 8.45 million voted, corresponding to a turnout in the order of 74 %. The comprehensive legislative package includes provisions for the legalisation of same-sex marriages, surrogate parenting and adoption rights for homosexual married couples. The law further includes measures against gender-specific violence and further provisions on the protection of women, children and the elderly. The draft of the reform was the subject of a public opinion poll in the spring of 2022 to which half of the population responded, according to official information. Parliament already having approved the amendment of family law back in July, the Cuban government duly made the case for amendment through various channels, including state media, social networks and rallies.

Djibouti

Attack on soldiers

According to official information, seven soldiers were killed in a clash with an armed group at an army base in Garabtisan on 07.10.22. Four soldiers were wounded and six are still missing. The government has blamed the attack on Armed FRUD, a breakaway faction of the Front for the Restoration and Democracy (FRUD) comprising members of the ethnic group which is opposed to the government. FRUD has released a statement condemning the attack, which it also blames on Armed FRUD.

DR Congo

UN report: Torture and other forms of abuse remain widespread

According to media reports, a joint report published on 05.10.22 by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) in DR Congo and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), covering the period from 01.04.19 to 30.04.22, highlights the continuing nationwide use of torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment in a climate of widespread immunity. The report alleges that persons exercising protected basic freedoms, such as freedom of expression or freedom of assembly, risk imprisonment and torture. The report documents 3,618 cases of torture and other forms of abuse nationwide involving at least 4,185 victims, including children, for which it claims members of the Congolese security forces and armed forces and non-state armed groups are responsible in almost equal portions. Cases of torture by non-state armed groups in cooperation with members of the security forces have reportedly also come to light. The report notes that 93 % of all cases documented nationwide have been recorded in the conflict-ridden provinces, where impunity is particularly widespread. The number of prosecutions brought against state and non-state actors on grounds of torture and abuse and the corresponding number of convictions remains small considering the extent of the problem, in addition to which a substantial number of unprosecuted and unexposed cases is to be assumed. Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, states that, while the Congolese government has made efforts

to combat torture and abuse, recommendations are rarely put into practice. There are numerous reports of the continued use of torture (resulting in death in some instances) following the changeover of power, in particular by state security forces such as the domestic intelligence service (ANR) (cf. BN of 11.07.22).

Numerous deaths in prison, no evidence of any measures to improve prison conditions

Recent press reports point out that the precarious conditions in the substantially overcrowded prisons, with inadequate healthcare and food supplies, have been responsible for numerous deaths in prison. MONUSCO recorded a total of 93 deaths at eight prisons up to 31.08.22, first and foremost at Goma central prison (North Kivu), followed by Makala central prison in Kinshasa and Bunia central prison (Ituri). These deaths are attributed primarily to malnourishment, tuberculosis and consequences of overcrowding. UN radio station Okapi has reported that eight inmates died at Kalemie central prison (Tanganyika) as a result of malnourishment and medical neglect in the period from 18.09. to 29.09.22 alone. Okapi reports that the food and healthcare situation in this central prison has been critical for some months now, in the face of sustained inaction by the provincial government. The provincial coordinator of the citizens' movement Parlement Debout recently told Okapi that a total of 47 inmates had died at Kalemie central prison since the beginning of 2022, citing a severe or total lack of food and/or healthcare as the main reasons behind these deaths. According to the coordinator, there are a number of acutely malnourished and ill inmates in Kalemie central prison at present.

The NGO Bill Clinton Foundation for Peace (FBCP) has criticised the continuing failure of the government and the judicial authorities to take any action to improve prison conditions since a joint report by several NGOs on overcrowding in prisons was published in August 2022. According to the report, harsh and life-threatening conditions prevail in the prisons and detention centres of DR Congo, all of which are overcrowded (cf. BN of 29.08.22).

Haut-Katanga province: Improvement to security situation makes returns to the province possible

UNHCR spokesperson Boris Cheshirkov, who reported in July on options for safe and dignified return to various provinces in western Congo and to certain central provinces (cf. BN of 25.07.22), has stated that the stable security situation opens up possibilities of people returning to a number of regions in the south-eastern province of Haut-Katanga, without naming any specific regions. Cheshirkov reports that since the end of 2021 Congolese refugees who fled political and inter-ethnic conflicts in the south-east of DR Congo between 2016 and 2017 have been able to return voluntarily with the support of the UNHCR, adding that 11,000 more refugees are set to follow up to the end of 2022.

Situation for Rwandans, Rwandan-language speakers and or people of Tutsi descent; ethnic conflict reaches Kwilu

According to UN radio station Okapi, three youths in Masimanimba territory (Kwilu) in the western Congolese province of Kwilu experienced substantial hostility on 01.10.22 due to their idiom and their morphology, on the basis of which they were assumed to be members of a Nilotic people, to which Tutsi also belong. They were reportedly accused of being infiltrators and/or Rwandan rebels. Police intervention prevented the situation escalating into lethal violence. The youths were taken to the police station and duly released on the same day, after their parents had presented Congolese birth certificates. Reports most recently appeared in June 2022 on numerous ethnically motivated attempted or actual killings and violence against Rwandans, Rwandan-language speakers and people of Tutsi descent, members of the Banyamulenge Tutsi community or people who are suspected of belonging to any of these groups solely on account of their physiognomy or speech (cf. BN of 20.06.22, 27.06.22 and 25.07.22). The western Congolese province of Kwilu is now also affected by the continuing serious interethnic conflict which was originally limited to the neighbouring province of Mai-Ndombe (cf. BN of 27.09.22). President Félix Tshisekedi and others speak of a "black hand" behind this conflict, alluding to the fact that individuals who do not speak any of the country's languages or dialects have been arrested in Mai-Ndombe.

Equatorial Guinea

Five die in attack on headquarters of an opposition party

According to reports in the media, four opposition activists and one police officer died in the capital, Malabo, on 29.09.22 when state security forces attacked the headquarters of the Ciudadanos por la Innovación (CI) party, which has been banned since 2018. In addition, 150 supporters of the party were reportedly arrested during the incident. According to official information, 119 of those arrested were released on 06.10.22. The party's leader, Gabriel Nsé Obiang, remains in custody. Obiang is accused by the authorities of having failed to comply with a court summons. Human rights organisations describe the country as particularly repressive. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo will run for a sixth term in office in the early parliamentary elections in November 2022. The 80 year-old has been in power continuously since 1979.

Ethiopia / Eritrea

African Union invites government and TPLF to peace talks

The meeting planned for 08./09.10.22 in South Africa between Ethiopian government representatives and the regional government of Tigray - the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) - has been postponed at short notice "for logistical reasons". A new date has yet to be announced. The talks, to which the African Union had invited the two sides on 01.10.22, would have represented the first bilateral negotiations since the outbreak of the war in Tigray in November 2020.

Fighting continues in Tigray

It is reported that the Eritrean armed forces in particular are redeploying units and heavy artillery to the border region in the north-west of Tigray. On 27.09.22 the BBC published satellite photographs from the previous day which purportedly show troop movements and positions in the area around the town of Shiraro. Tigrayan media additionally report that sustained drone attacks by the Ethiopian air force have resulted in numerous civilian casualties, particularly in the town of Adi Daero, where more than 50 civilians allegedly died on 03.10.22. On 07.10.22 at least five people were reportedly killed in an air raid near Mekelle, Tigray's capital. The Ethiopian government has accused the Tigrayan militias of hiding their weapons in residential areas. The Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) announced on 02.10.22 that it had retreated on tactical grounds from North Wollo (Amhara Region), which it had occupied in a renewed outbreak of fighting in August 2022, in order to counter the offensive at the border with Eritrea (cf. BN of 26.09.22).

Neither the Ethiopian nor the the Eritrean sides have commented on this. Independent confirmation of the reports is not possible, as the areas affected by the fighting are largely cut off from telephone and internet communications and media representatives are banned from entering the territories.

EU condemns human rights violations in the Tigray conflict

In a resolution on 06.10.22, the European Parliament condemned the human rights violations committed by all parties to the conflict, including the recruitment of child soldiers, targeted attacks on the civilian population and the civilian infrastructure and sexual violence against women. The resolutions calls on all parties involved to respect human rights and to engage in peace talks without delay in order to end the conflict.

Over 100 civilians killed in Oromia

According to information from the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), more than 100 civilians were killed in armed attacks in the woreda (district) of Amuru in the Horo Guduru Wollega zone (regional state of Oromia) in September 2022. The EHRC further reports that there have been cases of looting and thousands of people have left the region, which borders with the regional state of Amhara, for fear of further violence. Local authorities blame the attacks on the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA Shane) and Amharic militias (cf. BN of 05.09.22). The EHRC accuses the security forces of being incapable of bringing the increasing violence under control.

There are also reports of fighting between OLA Shane and regional security forces in the Guji zone in southern Oromia, following an attack by the OLA on a military camp of the Ethiopian armed forces (Ethiopian National

Defense Forces, ENDF). OLA claims it launched the attack in revenge for ENDF killing an OLA commander on 23.09.22.

The OLA was formerly the armed wing of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). After the OLF signed a peace accord with the Ethiopian government in January 2019, the majority of OLA fighters backed demobilisation. Some OLA factions – such as OLA Shane – continued the armed struggle for an independent Oromia, however. Hostilities are concentrated first and foremost in the west and south of the regional state.

The Gambia

Problematic conditions in police facilities and prisons

According to the chair of the national assembly's human rights committee, Madi Ceesay, conditions in the various police stations and prisons visited throughout the country continue to contravene current human rights standards, despite a number of improvements. In particular, Ceesay highlighted the conditions in police holding cells, which are subject to overcrowding and inadequate sanitary and hygienic standards. Ceesay pointed out that half of the inmates in Janjanbureh prison and above all in the overcrowded Mile II prison are prisoners awaiting trial, adding that cases of protracted imprisonment on remand continue to be a problem.

President attacks UDP, CPG: Banned demonstration, intimidation, revocation of legal status for civil society movement

According to reports in the media, president Adama Barrow has accused the main opposition party, the United Democratic Party (UDP), of being the driving force behind the protest planned for 11.11.22 by the recently founded civil society movement Coalition of Progressive Gambians (CPG). The UDP played a similar role in connection with the 3 Years Jotna protest movement. The planned protest has already been banned. 3 Years Jotna was banned by the government following violent clashes with the police at a protest against president Barrow in January 2020 which led to the detainment of 137 demonstrators and a number of media representatives and the institution of criminal proceedings, which were duly dismissed (cf. BN of 15.02.21 and 10.05.21). The CPG, which sees itself as a politically neutral organisation, claims that the aim of the planned demonstration is to protest against the high costs of living, a dysfunctional healthcare system and rampant corruption in Gambia. The UDP, which rejects the president's allegations, has expressed concern at the latest comments by the president's deputy political advisor, who has allegedly called on the CPG to refrain from staging the planned demonstration against the government in order to avoid demonstrators suffering the same fate as Solo Sandeng. As head of the UDP's youth movement, Sandeng led a demonstration against the previous government of former president Yahya Jammeh in April 2016. He was arrested together with other UDP members and died two days later as a result of torture and abuse in the hands of the secret service. Citing the CPG, media have reported that the organisation, which was originally registered with the competent government authority as a legal association meeting all registration requirements, has since been stripped of its legal status. According to anonymous sources, the registration authority, which is assigned to the ministry of justice, has been subject to political intervention by the government in this instance.

Guinea

Trial of individuals charged over stadium massacre

The trial of those suspected of being responsible for the massacre on 28.09.2009, in which at least 150 people were killed and more than 100 women were raped, began on 28.09.22. In the incident concerned, people taking part in a peaceful demonstration at Conakry stadium were brutally attacked by Guinean security forces. The victims have waited 13 years for the trial to open. Eleven members of the security forces have been charged, including the former military chief, Moussa Dadis Camara.

ECOWAS imposes further sanctions

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) announced on 22.09.22 that it was imposing further sanctions on Guinea, stating that the interim government had so far failed to draw up a timetable for the transition period and the organisation of elections.

Iran

Nationwide protests: death toll of at least 185 to date

According to reports in the media, the widespread protests against the compulsory hijab and for greater freedom are continuing in more than 80 towns and cities in the country. Images in social media show protest marches of various sizes and women publicly removing their headscarves and waving them over their heads. Public protest banners bear slogans such as “We’re no longer afraid”, “We will fight” and “Death to the dictator”. Violent attacks on demonstrators by the security forces are the order of the day, culminating in deaths in some instances. According to reports in the press, the armory deployed by the security forces includes tear gas, rubber bullets and firearms. In some cases, demonstrators have reportedly thrown Molotov cocktails at mosques, centres of the paramilitary Basij militia and imams’ official buildings. Serious clashes are reported to have occurred in the city of Sanandaj (Kordestan province) on 08.10.22, for example, in the course of which security forces fired directly at demonstrators. At least two people were allegedly killed. According to state media, two members of the security forces were killed at protests in Tehran and in the Kurdish region in the north-west of the country.

Iran Human Rights (IHR, headquartered in Oslo) reported on 08.10.22 that at least 185 people have been killed, 19 of whom are purportedly children, as a result of the violent actions of the Iranian authorities since the protests began. 85 of these victims have reportedly been killed in the city of Zahedan (Sistan and Baluchestan province), including six children. A Kurdish human rights network reported over 57 people injured and 2 killed in Kurdish towns and cities on a single day on 08.10.22. Foreign media state that the precise numbers of people injured, killed and arrested remain unclear, however. Internet restrictions continue to make communications among the population and comprehensive, independent reporting difficult. Following a meeting between president Ebrahim Raisi and representatives of the security forces, the Iranian interior ministry announced that those arrested would be brought to trial swiftly and faced severe penalties. Those in custody reportedly include activists, media representatives, journalists and lawyers.

Following the temporary closure of schools and universities in various towns, further strikes and protests have occurred at educational establishments. During an address by president Raisi at Zahra university in Tehran on 08.10.22, students chanted slogans against the visit and against a corrupt regime. A Kurdish human rights network has additionally reported extensive shop strikes in Kordestan province and in Mahabad (West Azerbaijan province).

Iraq

Conflicts between militias

An attack was launched on a building of Muqtada As-Sadr’s Saraya as-Salam in Basra on 04.10.22. On 06.10.22 As-Sadr publicly stated that his supporters should refrain from engaging in violence. A similar statement was forthcoming from the rival Asa’ib Ahl al-Haqq group.

Iranian attacks on opposition groups

On 09.10.22 the envoy of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iran, Nazim Dabbagh, announced that Iran had intimated that it reserved the right to undertake further measures against opposition groups operating within the KRG, demanding that Iranian opposition groups within the KRG leave their military basis and headquarters. A total of 16 people are confirmed to have died in drone and rocket attacks across the national borders in September and October, and a number of villages near the border were duly evacuated. The district of Sidakan was particularly severely affected. Iran accuses Kurdish opposition groups of stoking the current unrest in Iran.

Conflict between Turkey and PKK

The well-known women’s rights activist Nagihan Akarsel was murdered in Sulaimaniyya on 04.10.22. In view of her close ideological ties to the PKK, a link to the Turkish military operations against the PKK is surmised; a number of suspects have been arrested. Turkey’s ambassador to Iraq stressed in Baghdad on 09.10.22 that PKK members and individuals and activists close to the PKK were being targeted by Turkey, which continues to regard the presence of the PKK to the south of its borders as a substantial threat.

Lebanon

Economic situation

Following the renewed opening of the banks, there have been numerous instances of Lebanese people - sometimes armed - demanding their own deposits:

On 03.10.22 four people stormed the BLOM bank in Haret Kreik. They received around US\$ 11,000 from one of the four's bank account.

On 04.10.22 employees of an electric company stormed an FNB branch because charges had been deducted automatically from their salaries. On the same day, the BLC bank in Chtaura was raided by a retired member of the security forces, who demanded his deposits amounting to US\$ 24.502. He needed the money to enable his son to continue studying. In Tyrus a branch of the Byblos bank was stormed. Agreement was reached here on a payout in Lebanese pounds. A special focus of media attention was a case in Hamzieh in which a former ambassador amicably demanded that part of his savings be handed over.

A woman who obtained her family's savings by extortionate means to pay for her sister's cancer operation was temporarily banned from leaving the country on 06.10.22.

A renewed temporary closure of bank branches was announced on 07.10.22.

Libya

Mass grave discovered in Sirte

The authorities announced on 02.10.22 that a grave containing 42 bodies had been discovered in the coastal city of Sirte. The city in which long-time ruler Muammar al-Gaddafi was born was under the control of IS between August 2015 and December 2016. In December 2016, units of the then incumbent Government of National Unity (GNA) drove IS out of Sirte. It is assumed that the bodies in the graves are linked to IS's period of rule in Sirte. Eleven bodies were found in a grave close to the site of the latest discovery back in May 2022.

Niger

Renewed attacks in the Diffa region

Armed attackers, thought to be Boko Haram fighters, reportedly shot dead eleven farmers (nine from Niger and two from Nigeria) near to the town of Toummour on 20.09.22. A similar attack occurred at the end of August 2022, in the course of which at least 20 people died and a number of people were abducted. Toummour is located in the Diffa region in the south-east of the country, close to Lake Chad. Attacks on the civilian population by Boko Haram and ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province) are common here.

Nigeria

Kaduna State: Kidnapped train passengers freed after more than six months

According to reports in the media, on 05.10.22 security forces freed the final 23 hostages from a hijack in March 2022. Official representatives have stated that no military force was deployed in the rescue operation. Unknown persons attacked a train carrying hundreds of passengers on the railway line between Abuja and Kaduna on 28.03.22 (cf. BN of 04.04.22 and 11.04.22). Many of those abducted in this attack were in the kidnappers' hands for months. High ransom demands were reported in the media (cf. BN of 01.08.22).

North-west: Killings and abductions in attacks on villages

According to media reports, at least 18 people drowned in the north-western federal state of Zamfara on 05.10.22 while fleeing in two boats from an attack by unknown assailants on the village of Birnin Wajje in Bukkuyum Local Government Area (LGA). Those who drowned were women and children. The attackers shot dead at least six people and abducted seven people before opening fire on those fleeing in the boats. The same attackers had previously abducted at least 16 people from the nearby village of Dargaje. Zamfara is among the federal states with a particularly problematic security situation (cf. BN of 10.01.22, 28.03.22, 20.06.22 and 29.08.22).

South-east: Five more members of the security services killed

According to information in the media, unknown assailants shot dead five members of the military and one civilian in the south-eastern federal state of Anambra on 28.09.22. Around 100 members of the security forces have reportedly been killed since the beginning of 2022. Government sources regularly link members of the independence movement Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and members of its armed wing, Eastern Security Network (ESN), to acts of violence against civil servants and government institutions. IPOB and ESN deny any responsibility for the attacks (cf. BN of 27.06.22 and 01.08.22).

MSF: Health crisis in the north-west

In a press announcement on 27.09.22, the Doctors Without Borders relief organisation (MSF) pointed out that an exceptionally high number of children are suffering from malnourishment in the north-west. MSF has treated around 100,000 children in this connection since the beginning of 2022. 17,000 children have required hospital treatment at one of ten in-patient centres in the federal states of Kano, Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto and Kebbi. The organisation states that the number of children affected by malnutrition has risen still further since it last reported in this connection in a press announcement on 07.07.22 (cf. BN of 18.07.22).

Pakistan

Attacks and hostilities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Eight Pakistani soldiers were injured in a suicide attack on a military convoy in the tribal district of North Waziristan on 27.09.22. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. The return of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) fighters to the tribal districts recently sparked protests.

On 03.10.22 TTP fighters attacked a military convoy near Peshawar. According to official information, two soldiers were killed in the exchange of fire, five were injured and six of the attackers were killed. The TTP claims that two fighters and four soldiers died. Unrelated to this incident, the police report that on the same day four suspected TTP fighters were killed in the Tank district.

Attack on Chinese nationals in Karachi

On 28.09.22 an unknown assailant killed a Chinese national and injured two other Chinese at a dental clinic in the seaport of Karachi. The three victims had reportedly been living in Pakistan for 30 years and had acquired Pakistani citizenship. In the past, Baloch separatists have claimed responsibility for attacks on Chinese targets, criticising China's investments aimed at linking the Chinese province of Xinjiang with the Arabian Sea by way of a road and rail network.

Palestinian territories / Israel

West Bank: Numerous deaths in arrest raids and violent clashes with the Israeli military

A number of Palestinians have been killed or injured in the course of arrest raids and ensuing violent clashes with the Israeli military.

On 28.09.22 four Palestinians were killed and 44 injured at Jenin refugee camp. Two of those killed were the targets of an arrest operation by the military.

On 01.10.22 a Palestinian was killed who, according to the military, had attempted to throw an incendiary at a member of the military in the course of a demonstration at the Israeli border installation in the town of Azariyah, close to Jerusalem.

On 03.10.22 two Palestinians were killed in an arrest raid at Jalazone refugee camp near Ramallah. According to the military, the two men attempted to drive their car into a group of military personnel who were about to carry out arrests. A third person in the car was wounded and subsequently arrested. Those living at the camp denied the military's assertions against the two killed men.

On 05.10.22 a Palestinian was killed in an exchange of fire with the military in the village of Deir al-Hatab near the town of Nablus in the north of the West Bank. According to the military, the exchange of fire occurred when military personnel attempted to arrest a wanted member of Hamas who was suspected of having carried out an attack on

an Israeli bus and a taxi near Nablus. The wanted man gave himself up. The Palestinian Red Crescent claims that seven people were injured, including three media representatives.

On 07.10.22 two Palestinian minors were killed by the military: A 14 year-old at the border installation near the village of Qalqilya in the north of the West Bank, where the military alleges its personnel shot at a person throwing incendiary projectiles, and a 17 year-old in the course of violent clashes in a village to the north-west of the city of Ramallah. More than 50 people were injured during the clashes.

In the face of the rising number of deaths, 2022 already represents the year with the highest death toll resulting from the conflict with the military in the West Bank since 2015. More than 100 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military over the course of the year. The military states that the majority of those killed were members of militant groups or individuals who were endangering the lives of Israeli soldiers by throwing stones. The military stepped up its operations in the West Bank following a series of fatal attacks inside Israel in the spring of 2022.

Israel / West Bank: 798 Palestinians in administrative custody

The Israeli organisation HaMoked reported on 02.10.22 that 798 Palestinians are currently being held in administrative custody at Israeli prisons. According to HaMoked, the detainees can be held in administrative custody for months or years without any charges being brought against them.

The Israeli authorities justify the concept of administrative custody on the grounds that they need to be able to arrest and interrogate individuals who are incriminated by secret information without disclosing the information concerned. The current number of prisoners in administrative custody represents the highest level since 2008.

West Bank: Homosexual Palestinian killed

On 07.10.22 the decapitated body of a Palestinian was found near Hebron. The victim, who came from the area around Hebron, had been seeking to obtain asylum in Israel for two years on account of his homosexuality.

The family has stated that the victim had been commuting between Hebron and Jordan in recent years and had lived and worked in Jordan. The topic of his sexual orientation was not addressed. In the wake of the killing, an Israeli organisation involved in efforts to provide protection for homosexual Palestinians in Israel stated that the victim had sought protection on account of his homosexuality and had expressed fear of his family and residents of his native village. Until his death he had been living at various shelters in Israel and had been attempting to resettle in Canada with the organisation's support. An acquaintance of the victim has been arrested.

East Jerusalem: Israeli soldier killed

On the night of 08.10.22 an Israeli soldier was killed by a Palestinian who opened fire on an Israeli checkpoint. Three people were additionally injured in the attack near the Shuafat refugee camp in East Jerusalem. According to the police, the attacker got out of his car and opened fire before fleeing to the camp. The subsequent search for the attacker sparked disturbances at the camp.

Russian Federation

Deaths among mobilised conscripts

There have been numerous instances of mobilised conscripts dying in various regions of Russia since the partial mobilisation was announced. There are growing indications that these deaths are linked to inadequate accommodation and provisions, alcohol abuse and mental suffering among the conscripts concerned. There are also instances of individuals with medical conditions being conscripted. On 02.10.22 a 35 year-old conscript died at a recruitment camp in Novosibirsk four days after being mobilised. The cause of death is not known. Three conscripts died in the Sverdlovsk region at the beginning of October. One suffered a heart attack, while another committed suicide. The third died of liver cirrhosis. Dead conscripts have also been found in the Tyumen and Sverdlovsk regions and in Omsk.

Criminal proceedings for "Evasion of military or alternative civil service" quashed

On 05.10.22 the investigative committee of Pensa Oblast instituted the first criminal proceedings nationwide following the partial mobilisation announced on 21.09.22, bringing charges against a resident in accordance with Article 328 of the Russian criminal code ("Evasion of military or alternative civil service"). The investigative

committee held that he had failed to appear for conscription without recourse to any legal grounds for exemption from military service. The public prosecutor's office of Pensa Oblast ruled that the instituted criminal proceedings were unlawful, however, and dismissed the case. The present ruling stems from a clarification by the Supreme Court in 2008 stipulating that Article 328 of the criminal code is applicable solely to persons who evade temporary military service in the context of a general conscription. It is thus not applicable in the context of a mobilisation or partial mobilisation.

Rwanda

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press

Three journalists arrested in 2018 were acquitted by a court in Kigali on 05.10.22 for lack of evidence. The persons concerned were originally charged with incitement to insurrection and spreading false information. The verdict was announced in the absence of the accused. Notwithstanding the acquittals, human rights organisations have criticised the fact that the journalists had been detained for years, which they regard as a means of intimidation to suppress freedom of expression.

Somalia

Several attacks, killing of a co-founder of Al-Shabaab

A clan chief (Hawadle clan) was killed in an attack by Al-Shabaab near Moqokori (Hiran region) on 27.09.22.

A high-ranking police officer and several other persons were killed when a land mine exploded near Bal'ad (Shabelle region) on 30.09.22. Among the dead were reportedly several guards and a state television journalist. No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack to date.

It has been reported that Al-Shabaab killed at least twelve civilians during a well drilling operation in Gariley (Gedo region) on 30.09.22. Equipment and building materials were allegedly also destroyed.

At least 40 people were reportedly killed and almost one hundred people injured when three car bombs exploded in several suicide attacks in Beledweyne (Hiran region) on 03.10.22. The attacks were aimed at a military base. The dead are believed to include the regional health minister and the region's deputy governor. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attacks.

The attacks followed shortly after a government address in which it was stated that the co-founder of Al-Shabaab, Abdullahi Nadir, had been killed by the Somalian army in cooperation with international partners in the south of Somali on 01.10.22.

Somaliland: Senate votes to extend president Abdi's tenure

On 01.10.22 Somaliland's senate resolved by a majority vote to extend the tenure of incumbent president Muse Bihi Abdi by two years. The electoral board had previously postponed the election planned for November 2022 until 2023, on financial grounds and due to a lack of time, among other reasons (cf. BN of 26.09.22).

Warning against publishing Al-Shabaab propaganda

On 08.10.22 the deputy minister of information, Abdirahman Yusuf, announced tough action against media which publish propaganda reports in connection with Al-Shabaab, including their acts of terrorism and their ideology. He stated that this constituted a criminal offence. These measures will not apply to normal reporting on Al-Shabaab in the media, however. The minister said that the government had also launched a cyber operation in the social media and deactivated more than 40 accounts of Al-Shabaab supporters, including on Facebook and Twitter. This step has been undertaken while the armed forces are conducting a counter-offensive against Al-Shabaab.

South Sudan

Growing violence as a result of inadequate state structures

Experts from the UN Commission on Human Rights in South South Sudan have warned that the outstanding implementation of key aspects and reforms of the 2018 Juba peace accord and the monitoring of implementation

by the international community are very important and must not be neglected. In particular, the experts stress that three bodies which were to be established under the provisions of the peace accord have yet to be brought into being. These are the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing, a so-called Hybrid Court and a Compensation and Reparation Authority. In the absence of such working transitional judicial bodies and without a reform of the security sector ahead of the elections planned for 2024, the experts see it as highly probable that violence will spread throughout the country, driving millions of people abroad.

The lack of due legal process to address committed crimes is regarded as constituting a particular obstacle to a positive course of development. In this connection, the experts refer to the federal states of Unity and Western Equatoria, in some regions of which there are no official courts, but only so-called “customary courts”. They observe that crimes such as murder or rape usually go unpunished here. The UN commission’s experts are in possession of reports detailing the abduction and rape of women by soldiers of both the government and the opposition. This means that security can only be achieved through accountability under criminal law, in view of which the experts see the establishment of a hybrid court as non-negotiable.

According to information from the local authorities, the Sudan People's Liberation Army - In Opposition (SPLA-IO) launched severe, large-scale attacks on civilians in the Morobo County region of the federal state of Central Equatoria in the period from 30.09. to 03.10.22. Looting and rapes occurred and the targets of the attacks were reportedly driven from their homes. 814 people have been displaced and now face a precarious situation with regard to basic necessities. The SPLA-IO has since announced that it will be carrying out an investigation into the crimes it is alleged to have committed.

Sudan

Further demonstrations

Demonstrations were held in various towns and cities in the country on 29.09.22, under the well-known banner of “March of the millions”. The towns and cities involved included Khartoum, Wad Madani, Nyala and Dongola. In Khartoum the security forces used tear gas and extreme force to prevent the demonstrators from reaching the presidential palace. Members of the security forces reportedly also attempted to hit people participating in the demonstration with vehicles. The demonstrators blocked various key roads in the capital with barricades. In all, 49 people were reportedly injured in Khartoum.

The resistance committees in the federal state of Khartoum have announced that they will be staging a total of six demonstration under the “march of the millions” banner to mark the anniversary of the military coup of 25.10.21. The declared aim is to hold three large central demonstrations as well as three demonstrations which are to take place simultaneously in different cities. The demonstrations are planned for the period from 25.10. to 30.10.22. The resistance committees also announced additional “escalating activities”.

The first demonstrations took place on 06.10.22, after having been called by the resistance committees. Demonstrations took place in Khartoum, Omdurman, Khartoum North (Bahri), and in Wad Madani, El Gezira and Central Darfur. A number of roads in Khartoum were blocked by demonstrators and security forces alike. The security responded with severe force, deploying tear gas and driving the demonstrators through the streets, according to media reports. Numerous people were reportedly injured. In Khartoum North and Omdurman in particular, the release of a number of secret service officers was a special focus of the demonstrations. The officers concerned were accused of having killed demonstrators.

Intercommunal conflict

Members of the Hamar people demonstrated in El Nehoud (West Kordofan) on 01.10.22, blocking buildings of the Sudanese Company for Mineral Resources. Hamar demonstrators have been staging blockades since the end of August 2022, including on the key road between El Obeid (North Kordofan) and El Fasher (North Darfur). The blockades have since been removed. The aim of the responsible organisation, “Committee for implementation of the resolutions of the Hamar people”, is the formation of a new federal state, Central Kordofan, with El Nehoud as the capital. This ambition stems from a conflict over land between the Hamar and the nomadic Misseriya people, which has been flaring up repeatedly for some months and claiming lives. The leader of the SPLM-N, Abdelaziz El Hilu, called on all tribes in the federal state of West Kordofan to work together, stressing that the conflict between Hamar and Misseriya could not benefit either side. He also insisted that the government had a duty to mediate.

Security situation in Khartoum

The security situation in the capital is gradually worsening against the backdrop of the sustained deterioration of the economic, humanitarian and political situation which has been in progress for some years now. In recent days the media have increasingly carried reports about groups roaming the streets and indiscriminately robbing and threatening passers-by and shops with machetes and sticks. The problem is said to be particularly prevalent in Khartoum North district (Bahri). Residents accuse the security forces of being unable to handle the situation. There is also a suspicion that the security forces are deliberately failing to take action, in order to show the people who are demonstrating against the military coup that protests and demonstrations will only lead to insecurity and chaos.

Syria

USA: Three high-ranking members of IS killed

Spokespersons of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the USA have reported that a special detachment of the US armed forces killed three high-ranking members of IS on 06.10.22. The attacks took place at two different locations. In the first operation, US combat helicopters flew over parts of Hasakahs which are nominally under government control and dropped special forces in the village of Muluk Saray, where they killed Rakkan Wahid al-Shammari. This is the first known counter-terrorism operation to be carried out by the US in territory under Syrian government control in many years.

Hours later, two other high-ranking members of IS were killed by a drone attack in the rebel-controlled north. Abu Ala, the deputy leader of IS, was one of those killed.

There were reportedly no civilian casualties in either of the operations.

Cholera outbreak

On 05.10.22 the Syrian authorities recorded a total of 594 cases of infection with the *Vibrio cholerae* bacterium and 39 related deaths (cf. BN of 19.09.22). 605 suspected cases, several dozen confirmed cases and at least one death have been recorded in the rebel-controlled north-west of the country.

The first case of cholera in Lebanon since 1993 was also recorded on 06.10.22. According to the Lebanese health minister, the affected person is a refugee from Syria.

Türkiye

Prison terms for statements on Montreux convention

On 07.10.22 the public prosecutor's office called for five of the 103 retired marine admirals who commented on the Montreux declaration in 2021 to receive prison sentences of up to twelve years for conspiracy against the constitutional order. In 2021 the admirals criticised the construction of the Istanbul canal, stating that it undermined the convention of 1936, which sets out Turkey's sovereignty over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. The construction project envisaged by Erdogan is intended to create an alternative to the Bosphorus strait of Istanbul. The public prosecutor's office called for the other retired admirals to be acquitted, as they had not had any criminal intentions.

Registration restricted for refugees in Istanbul

Interior minister Süleyman Soylu announced on 07.10.22 that foreigners can no longer apply for a residence permit in eight Istanbul districts. At a press conference on the subject of migration which was held at the provincial head office for migration, Soylu stated that no new applications for residence permits were being accepted in the eight districts of Küçükçekmece, Başakşehir, Bağcılar, Avcılar, Bahçelievler, Sultangazi, Esenler and Zeytinburnu. According to information from the Turkish government, a total of 551,829 Syrian refugees are living in Istanbul, while the south-eastern provinces of Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa are accommodating 466,000 and 384,000 Syrian refugees respectively. Soylu states that the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey stands at 3,646,278, while 321,052 are under temporary protection.

Ukraine

Developments

The Ukrainian armed forces are advancing further eastward from Kupiansk (Kharkiv Oblast) in their counter-offensive. The Russian armed forces have since largely lost contact between Svatove and Kreminaa (Luhansk Oblast). In the south of the country, in Kherson Oblast, the Ukrainian military have launched a new offensive on the right bank of the Dnieper. The city of Zaporizhzhia is under particularly sustained fire, and the cities of Kharkiv, Mykolaiv and Nikopol are also regularly targeted by Russian rocket and drone attacks. The head of the public administration set up by Russia in Kherson Oblast, Vladimir Saldo, has stated that in the light of the current combat situation it was intended to evacuate certain categories of people, in particular children and the elderly, from Kherson Oblast to Crimea, Rostov Oblast and Krasnodar Krai. According to Saldo, the stated federal subjects are each prepared to admit up to 10,000 people.

Ukraine / Russian Federation

Explosion on the bridge over Kerch Strait

According to official information from Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee, a truck exploded on the bridge linking Crimea to the Russian mainland over the Kerch Strait in the early hours of 08.10.22, causing seven fuel tanks of a railway train to catch fire and explode. Media reports state that two spans of the bridge collapsed as a result. According to the Russian investigative authority, three people died. Traffic access to the bridge is currently restricted. No reliable information is available at present on the question as to whether the incident involved an accident or a targeted attack. Moscow is officially accusing the Ukrainian secret service of being responsible for the explosion. This has yet to be confirmed by the Ukrainian side. Mykhailo Podolyak, advisor to the head of the Ukrainian president's office, has welcomed the incident, stating that everything that is unlawful must be destroyed. Igor Smelyansky, head of the Ukrainian postal service, has announced the issue of a new stamp depicting the damaged bridge. On the peninsula itself the incident initially sparked great uncertainty about possible shortfalls in supplies. Representatives of Russian regional authorities initially confirmed that restrictions would be introduced on the sale of certain goods, only to state shortly afterwards that no such restrictions would be imposed after all and that there were sufficient supplies of food and fuel on the peninsula.

Venezuela

Extension of mandate for independent fact-finding mission for Venezuela

On 07.10.22 the UN Human Rights Council extended the mandate for the international independent fact-finding mission for Venezuela by a further two years. 23 states abstained from the vote. The mission was deployed for the first time in 2019 in order to investigate human rights violations in the country, and has since published three major reports (cf. BN of 26.09.22). While Venezuela and allied countries have criticised the mission as interventionist and the results of the investigations presented in the reports as "false and unfounded", various national and international NGOs have welcomed the mission's extension.

Flooding leads to deaths in Aragua

Sustained rainfall has led to severe flooding in the town of Las Tejerías in the federal state of Aragua, resulting in an official death toll of 25 on 08.10.22. More than 50 people were still missing on the evening of 09.10.22. Houses and infrastructure were destroyed. President Maduro has stated that emergency accommodation is to be set up for those affected. According to local and international NGOs, this latest incident brings the total number of deaths resulting from sustained rainfall in various parts of the country to over 40 in the past two weeks.

Yemen

Ceasefire expired: No extension

The ceasefire brokered by the UN on 02.04.22 expired on 02.10.22. No extension has been achieved. The Houthis and the internationally recognised government are blaming each other for the failure to bring about an extension. Contentious issues reportedly included pay for civil servants in general and the pay of police and military personnel in particular. The internationally recognised government is additionally demanding an end to the Houthis' blockade of the city of Taizz, while the Houthis are calling for the unrestricted opening of Sanaa airport and the port of Hodeida, both of which were partially opened during the ceasefire. The UN is continuing its efforts to broker a renewed ceasefire.

Meanwhile, the warring parties have bolstered their troop presences in the governorates of Marib and Taizz and initial fighting has broken out in the governorates of Al-Dhali and Lahij, with eight soldiers on both sides having lost their lives.

Group 62 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration
Briefing Notes
BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de