



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Security situation: Fighting between Taliban and resistance

It was reported in the media on 24.10.22 that the Taliban had accused residents of Behsud district in Maidan Wardak province of collaborating with the local commander of a Hazara resistance group, General Alipur, subsequently launching a large-scale attack on this district. In the course of the offensive, one civilian was killed, eleven injured and 15 houses set on fire. Many residents reportedly fled into the mountains.

According to reports in the media, eight Taliban fighters have been killed and six injured in fighting between the Taliban and the National Resistance Front (NRF) in Takhar province. The Taliban has declined to comment.

According to a report in the media on 22.10.22, the Taliban shot dead ten NRF prisoners (including a former Taliban commander who had defected) in fighting between the Taliban and the NRF in Badakhshan province.

On 22.10.22 the Taliban raided a cell of Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) in Kabul. Several explosions and exchanges of fire occurred in the course of the raid. According to the Taliban, the perpetrators of the attack on the Hazara Kaaj education centre on 30.09.22 were killed in the raid (cf. BN of 10.10.22).

It has been reported in the media that Ruslan Mirzoyev, Director of the Executive Committee of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), stated at an SCO security conference in Dushanbe on 18.10.22 that the number of members of Islamist groups in position along the common border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan is in excess of 13,500. He said that Tajikistan therefore needed international support in securing its border with Afghanistan. According to the Tajik interior minister, the Taliban have additionally issued approx. 3,000 passports to terrorists and are training suicide bombers.

Governance and persecution

According to a report published by the British NGO Intelligence Resistance Center on the Afghan Witness project on 18.10.22, the Taliban executed 27 bound and shackled prisoners from the resistance movement in Pajshir province in the middle of September. The executioners, victims, times and locations have reportedly been verified by reference to images from social media. According to a report in the media on 22.10.22, the Taliban have dismissed 400 government employees (ethnic Tajiks) in Panjshir province and replaced them with Pashtuns from Kandahar and Helmand. According to a report in the media on 19.10.22, the Taliban have notified the football association of Badghis province that football is to be banned in the province in future. On 23.10.22 the Taliban issued a letter to the faculties of Herat university instructing all girls to attend the university in accordance with the sharia dress rules stipulated by the Taliban, i.e. in a long dress (burka) in black or navy blue.

Algeria

Journalist sentenced to death

It has been reported in the media that the journalist Abderrahmane Semmar, known as Abdou Semmar, has been sentenced to death. The sentence is seen as a reaction to Semmar's involvement in the passing-on of confidential information about business affairs of the Algerian oil authority, Sonatrach. The publication of this information has evidently been held to constitute high treason. Various NGOs have again expressed concern that journalists increasingly face legal harassment and being taken into custody, also noting that many local and foreign news websites are blocked in Algeria.

The death sentence is no longer carried out and is always commuted into life imprisonment.

Chad

Protests claim at least 50 lives

According to reports in the media, at least 50 people were killed in protests against the military in Chad's capital and the country's second-largest city, Moundou, on 19.10.22. According to official information, members of police are among the dead. The demonstrators reportedly set up barricades and set fire to the headquarters of the National Union for Democracy and Renewal (Union nationale pour la démocratie et le renouveau, UNDR), the party of Saleh Kebzabo, who was appointed prime minister on 12.10.22. The security forces allegedly used tear gas and live ammunition against the protesters.

China

Xi Jinping confirmed as secretary general

As expected, party leader and head of state Xi Jinping was confirmed in office for a third term as secretary general on 23.10.22 (cf. BN of 17.10.22). This also paves the way for him to stand for a third term in office as the country's president in 2023. The Communist Party of China (CPC) approved corresponding amendments to the constitution at the close of its week-long 20th congress on 22.10.22. Shortly before, ushers led former party leader and head of state Hu Jintao away from his place on the stage next to Xi Jinping. The party congress also elected the party's new Central Committee, which was appointed by the Politburo and the latter's seven-strong Standing Committee. Prime minister Li Keqiang will no longer sit on the Standing Committee, but is to retain his seat until a successor is appointed. Xi Jinping has put China on an increasingly authoritarian track, with a focus on security, state control of the economy, a strong military and the takeover of democratically governed Taiwan.

Tibet: Chinese authorities collecting DNA data

According to an analysis by the University of Toronto and a report by Human Rights Watch (HRW), the large-scale collection of DNA data is taking place in the Tibet Autonomous Region. The Chinese authorities are already believed to be in possession of corresponding data on around one third of Tibet's population, which totals over 3.5 million. Blood samples are reportedly being used to create a database on all male residents of Tibet. China is clamping down on the Tibetan people's language and culture. Reports are common of forced labour, re-education camps and people setting fire to themselves in protest at this policy. Together with camera surveillance and facial recognition software, the DNA data serve to consolidate the totalitarian system of surveillance and social control. Responding to the reports, the organisation International Campaign for Tibet added that apart from constant technology-based mass surveillance the employed repressive methods also include stationing cadres of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in villages, towns and monasteries in Tibet.

Colombia

Coca growing and cocaine production at new record levels

According to a report published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on 20.10.22, both the cultivation of coca and the production of cocaine in 2021 rose to new all-time highs since records began 21 years.

The area under cultivation rose by 43 % in the space of a year, to over 200,000 hectares, while the production potential for cocaine hydrochloride increased to around 1,400 tonnes. The border regions Norte de Santander, Nariño and Putumayo remain particular focuses of cultivation and production. Justice minister Néstor Osuna notes that this represents an unprecedented increase in cultivation and production in the country, despite the efforts to eradicate the problem.

The simple cultivation of coca and the fact that it can be harvested several times a year mean that it commonly offers farmers higher revenue than the production of traditional agricultural produce, such as cocoa and coffee. The UN is pursuing a project to encourage farmers to give up growing coca and to switch to other agricultural products.

DR Congo

Unlawful arrest and imprisonment of teachers by ANR

The national teachers' union (FOSYNAT) has sharply criticised what it describes as the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of at least five teachers by the national domestic intelligence service (ANR) in North Kivu province, which is under a state of emergency. To date, the only information forthcoming on this matter has been confirmation from a secret service source to UN radio station Radio Okapi that the prefect of the institute in Goma has been arrested by official order of superiors, without stating any further details.

Kabund family, interference with political freedom of action of the A.CH party

On 14.10.22 the regional court of Kinshasa-Matete sentenced the wife of the detained and indicted chairman of the recently founded opposition party, Alliance pour le Changement (A.CH), Jean-Marc Kabund, to an unsuspended prison term of six months for offences in the area of defamation, and required her to pay damages to the victim to the amount of US\$ 5,000. The victim, who filed the corresponding demand for prosecution, is the vice-governor of Kinshasa, Gérard Mulumba. Kabund, who once belonged to president Tshisekedi's inner circle and faces criminal charges including publicly insulting the president at his party's founding ceremony, remains in prison despite a ruling by the final court of appeal on 12.08.22 that he should be transferred to house arrest (cf. BN of 15.08.22).

Okapi has also reported that youths forced their way into the A.CH's party headquarters in Kinshasa and prevented a political event by the A.CH's women's league on 16.10.22, citing Kabund's imprisonment. Political activities by the A.CH were recently suppressed at a demonstration in Kinshasa, which police reportedly broke up by force (cf. BN of 05.09.22).

Second-highest poverty rate worldwide

Citing a current report from the World Bank, Deutsche Welle has reported that almost 64 % of the Congolese population lived on an average wage of under US\$ 2.15 a day in 2021. The World Bank estimates that almost one in six people exposed to extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa live in DR Congo, which has the second-highest number of poor people worldwide.

Ethiopia

Ethiopian and Eritrean troops report territorial gains in Tigray

Following days of air raids and heavy shelling, the Ethiopian military took control of Shire, in the north of Tigray, together with the Eritrean armed forces on 17.10.22. Local sources report a mass exodus among the local population. Many have fled out of fear of a repeat of earlier atrocities, including sexual violence and mass executions. Alamata and Korem in the south of Tigray have reportedly also been taken by the Ethiopian army, although the situation in Korem is unclear as the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) also claim to have the town under their control. A further advance by the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies in the direction of Mekelle, Tigray's capital, is expected. This is borne out by news that Aksum and Adwa in the north of Ethiopia were also captured on 23.10.22. 70 % of Tigray is now reported to be under the control of the Ethiopian military. At least 100,000 people have allegedly been killed in the re-escalation of fighting since the end of August alone (cf. BN of 29.08.22).

The Ethiopian government had previously announced its intention to continue its attacks, with the aim of taking control of the airports in Tigray so as to enable the delivery of humanitarian aid. Well-informed observers are sceptical, as similar promises have been made and broken in the past. Since the recent fighting began, no convoy of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has reached Tigray, where the UN believes more than 90 % of the population to be in need of food aid.

Experts speak of the “most devastating fighting in the world”. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has stated that the situation in Ethiopia is “getting out of control” and that violence and destruction have taken on alarming proportions. The Council of Europe has called on all parties to enter into negotiations and to comply with international humanitarian law. The EU’s high representative for foreign affairs, Josep Borrell, has pointed out that the situation in Tigray has never been so bad, from both a military and a humanitarian point of view. All parties involved have called unanimously for an immediate end to the fighting and for Eritrea to withdraw its army. Diplomats estimate that around 100,000 Eritrean soldiers are in action. On 22.10.22 thousands of people demonstrated in a number of Ethiopian towns and cities against interference by the western international community, including the USA, in the country’s internal affairs.

AU invites warring parties to peace negotiations once again

The African Union (AU) has planned new peace negotiations for 24.10.22. This is the AU’s second attempt to bring together the Ethiopian government and Tigray’s regional government, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), at the negotiating table. An initial meeting scheduled for 08.10.22 was postponed at short notice without stating any reasons (cf. BN 10.10.22). As a gesture of goodwill for negotiations, the TPLF announced the release of 9,400 Ethiopian and Eritrean prisoners of war on 21.10.22, including 500 women.

Guinea

ECOWAS secures shortening of transitional phase

In the face of the imminent imposition of sanctions by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and following a visit by the ECOWAS mediator on 18.10.22, interim president and junta chief Mamadi Doumbouya has announced that power will be returned to civilian forces within two years, according to reports in the media. In May 2022 the transitional parliament set the duration of the transitional phase at 36 months (cf. BN of 16.05.22). According to Doumbouya, the new 24-month term is to begin on 01.01.23, by when a precise timetable is to be in place. Opposition politicians have criticised the starting date.

Deaths and injuries in renewed protests

According to reports in the media, at least three demonstrators were killed in protests against the ruling junta in Conakry on 20.10. and 21.10.22. The Front National pour la Défense de la Constitution (FNDC), which called the protests, has announced that 20 people were wounded by gunfire and numerous demonstrators were arrested. The chief public prosecutor spoke of six injured members of the security forces and announced that action would be taken against the organisers of the banned demonstration. There have been various instances of such demonstrations involving civilian casualties since the summer of 2022 (cf. BN of 22.08.22).

Guinea-Bissau

Early parliamentary election postponed

The early parliamentary election planned for 18.12.22 (cf. BN of 23.05.22) has been postponed. Following consultations with parties, the government is proposing 23.04.23 as the new date. The new date has yet to be ratified by president Sissoco Embaló. Citing the minister for territorial administration, Fernando Gomes, media reports attribute the postponement to the fact that the process of newly registering the entire electorate and issuing ID cards for all voters has yet to begin. Special printers required for this purpose apparently only arrived in the country in mid-September. A group of seven parties has accused the government of incompetence and inaction with regard to organisation of the election, albeit without opposing the postponement, according to a report in the media.

Finance minister Ilídio Té had previously stressed that postponement of the election had nothing to do with the programme of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the country. Contrary to this statement, according to other media reports president Embaló has explained that the dismissal of all his advisors and of members of the presidential cabinet which was announced on 21.10.22 was necessary on grounds of rationalisation, which was also attributable to IMF demands. A halt to recruitment in the health and education sectors was also recently explained in terms of obligations towards the IMF (cf. BN of 19.09.22).

Cocaine smuggling, freedom of the press

High-ranking officials at the interior ministry and the public prosecutor's office have allegedly appropriated a major share of a cocaine find which actually amounted to 600 kg. Only just over 80 kg of cocaine were declared when the find was announced by the authorities in September 2022. According to reports in the media, the accusations stem from audio recordings indicating such wrongdoing in social media networks. On 10.10.22 the premises of private radio station Galáxia de Pindjiguiiti were raided by security forces, presumably in connection with reporting on the misappropriation of seized cocaine. Galáxia de Pindjiguiiti was able to resume broadcasting on the following day. According to a news agency report, the Capital FM radio station, whose premises were attacked in different circumstances on 07.02.22 (see BN of 14.02.22), resumed broadcasting on 07.10.22, though initially with music only.

India

Kashmiri journalist banned from leaving the country

The Indian authorities prevented Kashmiri journalist Sanna Irshad Mattoo from boarding a plane for the USA at New Delhi Airport on 18.10.22. The 28 year-old photo journalist was heading for the USA to receive the Pulitzer Prize for her coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic together with three other people who work for the Reuters news agency. In July 2022 she was prohibited from leaving the country to attend a book presentation accompanied by a photo exhibition in Paris. Various media representatives from Kashmir have repeatedly been banned from leaving the country in the past due to their coverage of the decades-old conflict in the Himalayas region.

Iran

Protests continue: human rights organisation reports 240 deaths to date and around 12,000 arrests

Reports citing estimates by the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) allege that at least 240 people have been killed to date in the continuing nationwide protests, including more than 30 minors. Some 12,000 people have allegedly been arrested. The figures cannot be independently verified. No corresponding official figures are made public. However, foreign media cite a spokesperson of the Basij organisation, a paramilitary volunteer militia deployed to fight the uprising, who claims that no more than 70,000 people, including 10,500 students, have taken part in the protests to date. He also claims that 70 % of those detained are under 20 years of age. No details have been provided as to how these figures were ascertained, however.

The situation remains unclear. Following calls by activists, further demonstrations and rallies reportedly occurred in numerous towns and cities throughout the country on 22.10. and 23.10.22, including Tehran, Isfahan (central Iran), Arak (Markazi province), Dezful (Khuzestan), Bandar-e Lengeh (Hormozgan) and Mahabad (West Azerbaijan). Rallies, protest actions, sit-ins and strikes took place at a number of universities and educational establishments on 23.10.22. Teachers' unions had called for such actions to demonstrate against the use of violence and arrests of students. Other actions by students targeted gender segregation, for example in university canteens. In addition to rallies during the day, night-time protests and violent clashes are reportedly also prevalent at local level, in the course of which the security forces have again attacked protesters with tear gas and truncheons. According to police information, more than 50 people were arrested following protests in Zahedan on 21.10.22. There are also reports of continuing strikes, particularly in towns and cities of the provinces with a predominantly Kurdish population, including Sanandaj and Bukan. Workers at a chocolate factory in the city of Tabriz (East Azerbaijan) reportedly also joined calls for solidarity strikes and assembled on the factory grounds on 22.10.22. This has led to an increasing presence by security forces in Tabriz. The truck drivers' union has reportedly also called for strikes as of 21.10.22.

Reporting continues to be hampered by large-scale interference with the internet. The BBC's Farsi service refers in this connection to widespread arrests of journalists.

Conviction of three activists from teaching union

Foreign media are reporting on the sentencing of three teaching union activists to prison terms, together with additional penalties (prohibition of all union activities and bans on leaving the country). The men were arrested in May 2022 in connection with protests by teaching staff. They were subsequently charged with colluding to arrange gatherings and of propaganda against the regime. Arrests were made in the course of protest rallies by the teaching unions in Tehran and other towns and cities on 12.05. and 13.05.22. The protesters called for the release of detained teaching staff who had been arrested in previous protests and for an end to the criminal prosecution of teachers (cf. BN of 16.05.22).

Iraq

The struggle against IS

On 19.10.22 an explosive device on a Peshmerga vehicle exploded in the Garmiyān district of Erbil province. At least one Peshmerga died and eight were wounded.

It became known on 23.10.22 that Iraqi security forces had arrested nine suspected IS supporters in Diyala province.

Conflict between Turkey and PKK

Two PKK supporters and two civilians were injured in an attack in Shingal district on 18.10.22. The precise course of events is unclear.

On 23.10.22 the Turkish defence ministry reported that the Turkish armed forces had killed three PKK members in the course of the week.

Repatriations from Al-Hawl

The return from Al-Hawl of a further 161 families comprising some 650 members was announced on 18.10.22. The families are now being checked at a transit camp in Ninawa province. Iraq claims to have repatriated 925 families in all to date. Around 55,000 IS members and their dependants currently live in Al-Hawl. They have been held there since the fall of IS. Around half of them are of Iraqi origin.

Lebanon

Economic situation

A number of amendments to banking law which form part of the pre-conditions stipulated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for financial assistance were passed in parliament on 19.10.22. Observers are largely agreed that the adopted amendments are not sufficient to meet the IMF's demands.

On the same day, the health minister gave a press conference on the topic of the current cholera epidemic. Some 170 cases have been recorded to date. The water supply problems are a major contributory factor to the spread of the epidemic. Energy for the water pumps of the water system is lacking in various parts of the country, despite the fact that UNICEF has secured a large quantity of diesel to power the corresponding generators for the time being. The minister stated that while chlorine to disinfect water is available, it is nevertheless a rare commodity. On the subject of vaccines against cholera, it was pointed out that these are difficult to obtain at present - not only for financial reasons, but also because there are a number of hotspots around the world and production capacities are very limited.

The UNRWA announced on 21.10.22 that it currently required US\$ 13 million in the near term to cover essential expenses in Lebanon. The crisis is having a disproportionately severe effect on Palestinians in Lebanon.

Montenegro

Constitutional court still lacks quorum despite complaint from EU and forthcoming local election

According to the latest report in the media, the Montenegrin constitutional court, which has lacked the necessary quorum since 20.09.22, remains unable to adjudicate, despite the EU's call for an end to the judicial blockade. On 20.10.22 EU ambassador Oriana Christina Popa reportedly called on the parliament once again to fill the four judges' posts which have become vacant as a result of retirements by voting in new judges with a two-thirds majority, noting that effectively functioning institutions were vital to ensuring the rule of law. However, the largest opposition party, DPS (Democratic Party of Socialists), reportedly announced on 21.10.22 that it would not support the appointment of the candidates proposed by the former government majority, as their selection was politically motivated. MPs of the Democratic Front (DF), which supports the candidates, have warned that a continuing blockade of the court could have negative consequences for the important local government elections, as the constitutional court represented the supreme court for any complaints regarding irregularities in elections.

Nicaragua

Indications of increasing repression of staff in the judiciary

In an interview with a civil servant from the area of the judiciary which was recently published jointly by Esta Semana and El Confidencial, the interviewee speaks of increasing surveillance and control of staff by Sandinista party activists, party membership being imposed as a precondition for continued employment, demotions in case of unwelcome public comments or activities and bans on attending mass or events of the Catholic church. Where people wish to travel abroad on holiday, a judge is first of all required to apply for a permit, which is almost always rejected, especially when the desired destination is the USA. The interviewee additionally indicated growing dissatisfaction among staff loyal to the ruling party - partly as a result of the bans on attending fairs and restrictions on travelling abroad. This information could not be independently verified.

However, other reports in the media reveal that at least three senior employees of the supreme court (CSJ) who are regarded as being loyal to the ruling party have been dismissed in recent weeks, presumably on direct orders from the FSLN secretariat which operates from within the presidential palace. The precise reasons for the dismissals remain a matter of speculation at present. In addition, Roberto Larios Meléndez, spokesperson and head of the supreme court's communications department, was arrested on 16.10.22 and taken to the Judicial Assistance Directorate (commonly known as El Chipote). Meléndez is also regarded as being a party loyalist. Other individuals also indicate that party political pressure, e.g. to support FSLN activities, is rising within government institutions ahead of the forthcoming local government elections. Prior to these latest developments, various international reports were already referring to a judiciary which lacked independence and was answerable to the supreme political leadership. At its most recent session on Nicaragua on 19.10.22, the UN Human Rights Committee also referred to a substantial worsening of the human rights situation since 2018.

Niger

Tillabéri: Security situation

It has been reported in the media that unknown persons staged an attack in the Banibangou region on 22.10.22, on the road linking Tizegorou and Banibangou. Between three and five trucks were reportedly set on fire and eleven people killed. The information in the reports varies. The attack is being blamed on members of Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (Etat Islamique dans le Grand Sahara – EIGS).

Nigeria

Niger State: Hospital staff and patients abducted

Armed attackers stormed a hospital in the town of Gulu in Niger State on 18.10.22, killing a number of people and abducting around 20. Gulu is situated approx. 100 km to the south-west of the Nigerian capital, Abuja. According to reports in the media, the kidnap victims include patients and their relatives as well as hospital staff, including a

doctor and a pharmacist. The official figures for the number of kidnap victims are lower. Niger State is among the federal states in which kidnapping crime has recently been common (cf. BN of 04.07.22 and 25.07.22). The kidnapers' primary aim is generally to extort ransom money.

Benue State: Clashes between herdsmen and farmers claim lives

18 people, including two police officers, died in an attack on a village in the central federal state of Benue on 19.10.22. Numerous people were injured. This emerges from media reports citing official information from 20.10.22. Herdsmen stormed the village of Gbeji in Ukum Local Government Area (LGA) with machetes and firearms. Conflicts between cattle herders and farmers over land, grazing and water rights are a common occurrence in large parts of Nigeria. According to a Benue police representative, this specific case was a reprisal for the killing of five Fulani herdsmen by villagers on 18.10.22, however. The spokesperson added that the number of people killed in the attack totalled not 18, but ten, including one police officer. Other reports in the media put the death toll at 23, however. Poverty and a lack of economic prospects are widely held to be key factors behind violent clashes between settled and nomadic people in Nigeria. Ethnic and religious rivalries are believed to compound the situation and make it even more difficult to resolve the conflicts, which have recently flared up with increasingly regularity.

Second anniversary of EndSARS protests

Police forces used tear gas and water cannons on 20.10.22 to break up a rally in Lagos marking the second anniversary of a protest action which ended in numerous deaths in 2020. Uniformed individuals opened fire on demonstrators on 20.10.20, following days of nationwide protests against police violence and poor governance (cf. BN of 26.10.20). The protest action went by the name of #EndSARS because one of the demonstrators' key demands was the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), which has a reputation for violence. The number of people killed and injured on 20.10.20 remains unclear to this day. According to recent information from Amnesty International, more than 40 people are still in custody. AI alleges that their period of detention has been extended without any judicial proceedings having been initiated against them. At the same time, the work by bodies set up to investigate police violence in Nigeria has yet to deliver any results.

Current figures for IDPs and foreigners seeking protection

According to information from the UNHCR, over 3 million internally displaced people (IDPs) and 92,048 registered persons seeking protection from other countries, in particular Cameroon, were living in Nigeria on 30.09.22. A synopsis drawn up by the UNHCR on 07.10.22 puts the number of IDPs in the north-east of Nigeria at 2,197,824, marking a slight drop from the figure of 2,200,357 which was recorded at the beginning of the year (cf. BN of 21.02.22). The number of IDPs in the North West and North Central zones has fallen over the same period from 983,701 to 969,757.

Pakistan

Former prime minister Imran Khan banned from National Assembly; PTI successes in by-elections

On 21.10.22 the Pakistani electoral commission unanimously found Imran Khan guilty of corrupt practices and banned him from the National Assembly. Khan's party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) swiftly rejected the verdict and called on its members to protest. According to a PTI spokesperson, the party is also awaiting a detailed explanation of the grounds behind the decision and reserves the right to lodge an appeal with the Islamabad High Court. The case stems from a motion tabled by a member of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in August 2022, claiming that Khan had purchased gifts from foreign dignitaries from the state "treasure trove" (toshakhana) and subsequently sold these on without disclosing any details of their sale to the commission. The toshakhana is a government department set up in the 1970s to which gifts from foreign guests of state have to be submitted. Khan, who was removed from office by a parliamentary vote of no confidence in April 2022, accused the commission of being biased. Following his removal from office, Khan held rallies throughout the country against the Pakistan Democratic Movement alliance (PDM) and called for the parliamentary elections which are planned for October 2023 to be brought forward. Khan won much support above all among young people and the PTI was highly successful in by-elections held under the Pakistani electoral system for vacant seats in July and October

2022. In the by-elections on 17.10.22 eight seats for the National Assembly were contested - three in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces respectively and two in the city of Karachi. Khan ran for seven of the eight seats and won six of these. While it is possible to run for several seats, if one candidate wins more than one seat they are required to decide on one seat and to give up the others. The other two seats went to candidates of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which forms part of the PDM alliance. In the by-elections in Punjab province in July 2022 the PTI won 15 of 20 seats. This is interpreted as indicating that the country's population is in favour of fresh elections. The incumbent government headed by prime minister Shehbaz Sharif (PML-N) has so far doggedly refused to hold early parliamentary elections.

Pakistan removed from grey list for funding terrorism, donors' conference in connection with flood damage

After four years, Pakistan was removed from the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force supervisory authority (FATF) on 21.10.22. In explaining the grounds for its decision, the FATF stated that Pakistan had eradicated the relevant technical deficiencies such that it could now meet its obligations under the action plans, whose measures include combating money laundering and the funding of terrorism as well as measures against armed groups and individuals. Countries on the FATF's grey list have only limited options in the field of international borrowing.

According to the government, the flooding in the summer of 2022 caused damage to the sum of US\$ 30 billion. The UN and France have held out the prospect of a donors' conference. Pakistan is among the countries most severely affected by climate change, although it contributes less than one per cent to global carbon emissions.

Counter-terrorism operations in Balochistan

Pakistani security forces shot dead four suspected fighters of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) in an operation in Kharan district on 18.10.22. No details have emerged, and the BLA has also failed to comment on the incident.

On 16.10.22 five fighters of an Islamist group about which no further details are available were killed in a gun battle with security forces in Mastung district.

Palestinian territories / Israel

West Bank: Palestinian attackers killed, deaths in clashes with the military, member of militant group in Nablus

A Palestinian was killed on 19.10.22 when he attacked a checkpoint at the entrance to an Israeli settlement near East Jerusalem with a firearm while carrying an explosive device. The settlement's guards returned fire, killing the attacker. One guard was injured. According to official Israeli information, the killed attacker was the man who was wanted for a lethal attack on an Israeli military checkpoint, in the course of which he shot dead a soldier (cf. BN of 10.10.22).

21.10.22 witnessed a renewed outbreak of violence by settlers near to the Palestinian town of Huwara. According to the Israeli military, the individuals concerned made their way through the town, throwing stones at Palestinian cars and using pepper spray against members of the military who attempted to break up the group.

On the same day, a Palestinian was killed when he was shot in the throat at Jenin refugee camp. The Israeli military became involved in armed clashes with Palestinians in the course of an arrest raid. Three other people were shot and wounded. The Islamic Jihad in Palestine group has released a statement claiming that the killed man was one of its members.

According to information from the Palestinian health ministry, a Palestinian died on 22.10.22 after being shot and wounded by the Israeli military at a checkpoint in the north of the West Bank. According to the Israeli military, the killed man was trying to cross the border into Israel illegally. When the military attempted to arrest him, he fled in his vehicle, hitting a male or female soldier, whereupon the military opened fire on him. The dead man's family claim that he was on his way to his regular place of work in Israel.

A Palestinian - according to reports in the media, a high-ranking member of the militant organisation The Lions' Den - was killed on 24.10.22 when an explosive device blew up in Nablus. The device was attached to a motorcycle and detonated as the victim walked by. It is unclear whether the device was timed or remote-controlled. The Lions' Den group has accused the Israeli military of having carried out a targeted killing.

East Jerusalem: Palestinian minor killed after knife attack

According to the Israeli military, a Palestinian minor was shot dead on 22.10.22 after seriously injuring an Israeli with a knife. The 16 year-old fled the scene, but the Israeli military was able to identify him. He was subsequently shot dead at a football pitch in the area of Sheikh Jarrah when he turned to face the military with an object in his hand.

Republic of the Congo

Provisional release and formal indictment

According to a report in the media, the student by the name of Mouloundou who was charged with endangering the state's internal security has been provisionally released after spending one year in prison without any judicial proceedings being brought against here (cf. BN of 14.03.22). The charge of unlawfully being in possession of weapons of war has reportedly been dropped.

Republic of Moldova

Anti-government protests in Chişinău

According to news agency reports, on 23.10.22 some 7,000 people demonstrated in the centre of the capital, Chişinău, against the pro-Western government which has been in power since 2021 and against president Maia Sandu. Regular protests have been taking place for some weeks now in the face of sharp rises in energy prices and ongoing supply problems with Russian gas. The protests are believed to be organised by the opposition party of business man Ilhan Shor, who is currently residing outside of the country. According to reports in the media, an economic state of emergency was declared on 21.10.22 in the region of Transnistria, which is not controlled by the central government. The measure has been justified by reference to the critical energy supply situation and is to remain in force for eleven days.

Somalia

Hotel siege in Kismayo

An explosion reportedly occurred on 23.10.22 outside the Hotel Tawakal in Kismayo, which is popular with local clan elders and business travellers. Following the explosion, the building was stormed by armed individuals and a seven-hour siege ensued. According to official information, at least nine people, including civilians, were killed and 47 injured. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Set-up of a hotline for people threatened by Al-Shabaab

As part of the offensive against Al-Shabaab, president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has announced the introduction of a hotline enabling members of the public to report individuals carrying out extortion on behalf of Al-Shabaab. The government states that it aims to block the collection of taxes and extorted revenue by Al-Shabaab. The government has previously warned local companies against supporting Al-Shabaab by acceding to financial demands, stating that this could lead to their business licences being withdrawn.

SJS secretary general re-arrested

Two days after being released on bail (cf. BN of 17.10.22), Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, secretary general of the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS), was arrested once again on 18.10.22. He was detained by the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) while on his way to Nairobi for medical treatment. There have been no official statements on the case so far.

Two parallel attacks in Hiiraan claim 21 lives

According to varying reports, between eleven and 15 people were killed when a car bomb exploded in a suicide attack in Jalalaqsi (Hiiraan region) on 19.10.22. The victims included civilians, members of the military, the town's mayor, Adan Mohamed Isse, and the district commissioner, Mohamed Nur Agajof Dabaashe. The primary objective

was reportedly to destroy the town's main bridge. Six people were killed, including four civilians, in another attack targeting the bridge in the town of Bulobarde (Hiiraan region), which represents the most important link between the Somalia's southern and central regions. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for both attacks. Mobilisations of clan members and coordinated operations by the military against Al-Shabaab have been stepped up in the Hiiraan region in recent weeks (cf. BN of 05.09.22 and 19.09.22).

Sri Lanka

Constitutional amendments to limit the president's power

On 21.10.22 179 MPs of the governing coalition and the opposition approved a constitutional amendment to limit the president's power. The two-thirds majority of the total of 225 parliamentary seats which was required for the constitutional amendment was thus attained. This was a core objective of the demonstrators who have been calling for political reforms and a solution to the economic crisis for some months now. The constitutional amendment provides for presidential powers to be transferred to a constitutional council comprising both MPs and individuals from outside of politics. The council is also to propose suitable candidates for government offices to the president in future. Sri Lanka is currently experiencing an economic crisis. For months now, the population has been suffering shortages of vital imported goods combined with a steep rise in inflation. President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who was sworn into office in July 2022, spoke out in favour of political reforms after his predecessor, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, had fled abroad. Wickremesinghe has secured a provisional agreement on a four-year aid programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Sudan

Further demonstrations

On 21.10.22 demonstrations against the military's seizure of power and in support of a transition to civilian government took place throughout the country. In many towns and cities, security forces attempted to prevent or contain the demonstrations by blocking roads and bridges.

Demonstrations occurred once again in Khartoum on 23.10.22. One protester was shot dead by security forces.

25.10.22 marks the anniversary of the military's seizure of power. The involved resistance committees have announced large-scale demonstrations and other actions for this day and 30.10.22. With regard to the demonstrations announced for 25.10.22, the UNHCR called on the Sudanese security forces to exercise moderation and to avoid the use of force.

Blue Nile State and West Kordofan: Intercommunal conflicts

Between 150 and 200 people have died and between 86 and 90 people have suffered injuries in renewed intercommunal fighting in the southern part of Blue Nile State. The latest fighting extended over two days, from 19.10. to 20.10.22, and was focused primarily on the Wad al-Mahi region. A group associated with the Hausa was reportedly attacked by armed assailants. Fighting and armed clashes have occurred repeatedly between the Hausa and other ethnic groups since July 2022 (cf. BN of 27.07.22, 05.09.22 and 17.10.22). The conflicts stem first and foremost from a law under which the Hausa are the last group settled in the Blue Nile region with no entitlement to land. The Hausa are demanding land ownership and the right to participate in political decision-making, but these demands are rejected by other ethnic groups.

In view of the ongoing violence, the governor of Blue Nile State declared a 30-day state of emergency on 21.10.22. On 22.10. and 23.10.22 demonstrations protesting against the violence and calling for the governor to resign took place outside the local headquarters of the Sudanese army.

According to UN information, such conflicts have cost almost 600 lives nationwide since the beginning of the year, while at least 211,000 have been driven from their homes.

Intercommunal fighting near to the town of Al Lagowa in West Kordofan State left 19 people dead and dozens injured in the days between 13.10. and 15.10.22 alone. According to a report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), at least 4,000 people have been displaced. The town of Al Lagowa

was shelled during a visit by the governor on 18.10.22. Four people died in a renewed flare-up of fighting on 21.10.22. OCHA puts the death toll at 23 and the number of people injured at 34 since the breakout of fighting in the region. OCHA additionally points out that the poor security situation makes it impossible to provide humanitarian aid.

The hostilities stem from a dispute between members of the Misseriya and Nuba ethnic groups over the use and ownership of land.

Syria

HRW: Türkiye has allegedly deported hundreds of refugees to Syria

In a statement on 24.10.22, Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused Türkiye of having arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned hundreds of Syrian boys and men and subsequently deporting them to Syria. According to HRW, the victims were forced to complete forms confirming the apparent voluntary nature of their departure from the country, before being taken to the areas of northern Syria under military occupation.

Russia scaling down military presence in Syria

A report citing western diplomats and a high-ranking member of the Israeli defence ministry which was published in the New York Times on 19.10.22 claims that the Russian military recently relocated personnel and equipment from Syria to the Ukrainian front. According to varying estimates, at least 1,200 to 1,600 soldiers, a number of commanders and, in particular, the S-300 air defence system are believed to have been withdrawn. The air defence system was deployed to Syria in 2018, since when it has presented an obstacle above all to Israeli air operations against Iranian targets in Syria. The withdrawn soldiers have reportedly already been replaced by Russian military police units, however.

Palmyra: Mass grave discovered

On 21.10.22 the state news agency, SANA, reported the discovery of a mass grave in the ancient oasis town of Palmyra. The twelve bodies buried in the grave are believed to be victims of IS, which controlled the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site in 2015 and 2016.

Tanzania

Man convicted of spreading false information about the country's president

According to local reports, Levinus Kidanabi was sentenced on 19.10.22 to seven years' imprisonment and fined 15 million TZS (approx. EUR 6,533 as per 24.10.22) for slandering president Samia Suluhu Hassan and spreading false information. The court found that he had spread false information on the head of state via a messaging service, in violation of the Cyber Crimes Act.

Türkiye

European Commission's Türkiye report on EU enlargement policy

The European Commission published its annual report on Türkiye on 14.10.22. The report indicates continuing severe deficiencies in the functioning of Türkiye's democratic institutions. The structural shortcomings of the presidential system reportedly still exist and parliament still lacks the necessary means to hold the government to account. According to the report, the constitutional structure continues to centralise powers at the level of the presidency, without guaranteeing a sound and effective separation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. In the absence of an effective mechanism of checks and balances, the democratic accountability of the executive remains limited to elections.

Amended press law in force

Following approval from president Erdogan, the bill to amend a number of laws, including the press law, was promulgated in the official gazette and entered into force on 17.10.22. It provides for prison terms of up to three

years for the “public spreading of disinformation.” The law sparked public criticism as the “censorship law” (cf. BN of 17.10.22). According to reports in the media, the Republican People’s Party (CHP) has filed a petition with the constitutional court for the law to be rescinded.

HRW report on removal of Syrian refugees

On 24.10.22 Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report on the removal of Syrian refugees from Türkiye. According to the report, Turkish authorities arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned hundreds of Syrian refugees and unaccompanied minors from Syria in the period between February and July 2022, subsequently deporting them to Syria. The deported refugees report that Turkish officials arrested them in their homes, at their places of work and on the street, held them in poor conditions in which most of them were beaten and abused, and forced them to sign forms for their voluntary return. According to HRW, they were then driven to border crossing points into northern Syria where they were forced at gunpoint to cross the border.

Tunisia

Demonstrations continue

According to information in the media, the demonstrations triggered by the violent death of a young man on 14.10.22 are continuing. The victim allegedly died from serious injuries suffered at the hands of the security forces. The security forces deny any responsibility for the man’s death.

Demonstrations by predominantly young people have been continuing for around a week. The police are countering the demonstrations with force. A number of people have reportedly also been detained in connection with the protests. 30 organisations have condemned the actions of the police and the judiciary against the protesters.

Recent weeks have witnessed a series of rallies and demonstrations against the poor economic situation, the brutality of the security forces and the anonymous burial of migrants who have died while attempting to make the crossing to Europe.

Ukraine

Martial law declared in occupied territories, further attacks on energy infrastructure

Martial law was declared by decree of Russian president Vladimir Putin on 19.10.22 in the Ukrainian territories of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk, which have been formally annexed by Russia and are under Russian control. Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called on men resident in these regions to flee to the territories controlled by Ukraine, in order to avoid possible conscription into the Russian armed forces. According to information from the Ukrainian government, 40 % of Ukraine’s infrastructure is now damaged, in the wake of the recent Russian attacks throughout the country. On 20.10.22 temporary power cuts were reported all over the country and the population was called on to use as little electricity as possible between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. Following further attacks on the Ukrainian energy infrastructure on 22.10.22, according to official information 1.5 million people were temporarily cut off from the power supply, including in the cities of Lutsk and Khmelnytskyi in western Ukraine. On 22.10.22 the Ukrainian prime minister, Denys Shmyhal, warned of possible new migration flows in the face of the current energy supply situation. On the evening of 23.10.22 president Zelenskyy announced that the power supply had been restored in the regions affected by the attacks on 22.10.22.

General military and humanitarian situation

According to reports in the media, Ukrainian military advances are concentrated in the direction of the city of Kherson. The Ukrainian general staff reported on 21.10.22 that 2,000 Russian conscripts had arrived in the Kherson region as reinforcements. The regional administration installed by Russia announced its withdrawal from the city and called on the population to leave the city at once, stating that 25,000 people had already been evacuated on 22.10.22. Sustained Russian attacks were reported in the Donetsk region, the targets including the towns of Bachmut and Soledar. According to Ukrainian sources, 22 torture chambers have been discovered in the recaptured parts of the Kharkiv region, while in the city of Lyman in the Donetsk region the exhumation of a mass grave has been completed in which the bodies of 111 killed civilians were found.

Yemen

Drone attack on Greek freighter

A Greek cargo vessel was attacked by Houthi drones while in the course of docking in the port of Ash-Shihr to load oil on 21.10.22. Ash-Shihr is located on the coast of Hadramaut governorate, which is under the control of the internationally recognised government. The government claims to have intercepted the drones. No injuries or damage have been reported. The Houthis described the attack as a warning and called on all companies to stop plundering Yemeni resources. The incident marks the first openly communicated hostile action since the ceasefire expired on 02.10.22.

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