



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Security situation: Fighting between Taliban and resistance

Local sources reported on 27.10.22 that unknown armed men had attacked a minibus carrying doctors of the Taliban's Al Farooq Corps in the city of Herat, killing four people and injuring 18. On the same day, armed men also attacked a Taliban outpost in the city of Herat, killing 14 Taliban members. While no-one has claimed responsibility for the attack, similar attacks have been carried out in the region in the past by Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP). On 24.10.22 the Taliban claimed fighting with the National Resistance Front (NRF) in Badakhshan province to be over and put the death toll among NRF fighters at 38.

Report by UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan

The Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council, Richard Bennett, presented his new report on the situation in Afghanistan to the UN General Assembly on 26.10.22. For the purposes of the report, he travelled to Kabul and various provinces, such as Panjshir, Bamiyan, Balkh and Kandahar, in October 2022 and spoke with the civilian population and minorities. He described the human rights situation as still alarming, in particular the banning of women and girls from public life and the persecution of the Hazara ethnic minority by ISKP. He stressed that the Taliban had broken international law by killing prisoners of war (from the resistance in Panjshir province).

Persecution

It was reported on 25.10.22 that the Taliban had forcibly driven some 18 families out of the village of Koshabeh in Panjshir province. Women protested against the Taliban's ongoing closure of girls' schools in Kabul on 29.10.22. On 30.10.22 the Taliban took violent action against female students who were protesting against the Taliban's dress regulations (compulsory wearing of the burka) at their university in Badakhshan province.

Bangladesh / Myanmar

Conference in Dhaka on the situation in Myanmar; Rohingya crisis

The leading English-language newspaper, Dhaka Tribune, and the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) organised a conference in the capital, Dhaka, last week to discuss the political instability in Myanmar. There was a view among those attending the event was that the overall political picture in Myanmar should first of all be analysed and an appropriate strategy should be sounded out to address the complex challenges in Myanmar, rather than focusing solely on the Rohingya crisis. The country formerly known as Burma has been declining into chaos and violence since a military coup in February 2021.

On 26.10.22 the Chinese ambassador stated in Bangladesh that Myanmar had assured China that it would approve as soon as possible the repatriation of the Rohingya who are currently accommodated in the camps in Cox's Bazar. The ambassador said that China was actively involved in brokering the repatriation of the Rohingya from Bangladesh

to Rakhine State in Myanmar. There were no reports in the media of any major damage or flooding at the Rohingya camps in Bhasan Char and Cox's Bazar after Cyclone Sitrang hit Bangladesh on 24.10.22 at wind speeds of up to 90 km/h. In response to an increase in the number of offences committed at the refugee camps, on 29./30.10.22 the police units responsible for the security of Rohingya in Cox's Bazar carried out a special operation, in the course of which they arrested at least 41 Rohingya, including six people suspected of murder. At a meeting of the Bangladeshi and Myanmar border police on 30.10.22, Bangladesh complained about shelling from the Myanmar side and military helicopter movements along the border. Myanmar regretted the incidents and held out the prospect of an intensification of friendly relations with Bangladesh.

Brazil

Lula da Silva wins presidential run-off

Former head of state Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva defeated the incumbent, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, in the run-off for the presidency on 30.10.22, claiming 50.9 % of valid votes against his opponent's 49.1 %. Lula previously governed the largest country in Latin America from the beginning of 2003 through to the end of 2010 and will now become the first democratically elected president of Brazil to serve a third term when he enters office on 01.01.23. While allies of Bolsonaro, including the speaker of parliament, Arthur Lira, recognised Lula's victory and called for the decision by the majority of the people to be accepted, the president failed to make any comment on the evening of the election. The president has repeatedly raised doubts about the electoral system and it remains unclear whether he will recognise the result. According to the elections administrator, voting went ahead without any incidents at the polling stations, although hundreds of buses were stopped and people were questioned before reaching the stations. Initial investigations by the electoral authority have revealed that although some buses did arrive later than planned, they all reached the polling stations in good time. International election monitors have judged the election to be free and fair.

Cameroon

Kidnappings: Southwest, North and Far North regions

A letter dated 23.10.22 from the bishop of Mamfe (anglophone Southwest region) which has been circulated on Twitter and taken up by the media reveals that the five priests, one nun and three believers who were kidnapped on 16.09.22 are now free once again. They were kidnapped in the course of an attack by unknown persons on the Church of St. Mary in the village of Nchang (cf. BN of 19.09.22, where the number of believers involved was put at two). No details have emerged about those responsible for the attack. The bishop condemned depriving people of their liberty with the aim of "making money at any price" as inhumane.

According to a report published by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS Africa) on 26.10.22 on the subject of kidnappings to extort ransom money in the North and Far North regions reveals a particularly sharp increase in such kidnappings in the past four years. Former herdsmen, criminal gangs and the Boko Haram terrorist group are identified as perpetrators. The latter, which was responsible for two recent kidnappings in the Lake Chad area in August and September 2022, reportedly also uses its kidnap victims as recruits, suicide attackers, workers and brides for its fighters. The economic gains from kidnappings represent the most important motive, however.

Central African Republic

Conflict over amendment to the constitution: President of the constitutional court dismissed

It was reported in the media on 25.10.22 that president Faustin Archange Touadéra had issued a decree dismissing the president of the constitutional court, Danièle Darlan. As the reason for the dismissal, the decree stated "permanent incapacity" (French: "empêchement définitif"), one of the few grounds on which the constitution provides for the premature termination of a constitutional judge's mandate, which otherwise has a term of seven years. The government spokesperson stated that the dismissal had nothing to do with the project to revise the constitution. On 23.09.22, the court to which the opposition had appealed annulled the decree issued by Touadéra on 26.08.22 to establish a commission for the purpose of drawing up a new constitution. It is generally assumed

that Touadéra is intending to run for a third term in office, which is prohibited under the current constitution. Recent months have witnessed a number of demonstrations in the capital, Bangui, both for and against an amendment to the constitution to Touadéra's benefit.

DR Congo

Situation of media representatives, increasing repression

The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (BCNUDH) reports increasing intimidation and threats against media representatives. The office has observed a steady increase since the beginning of 2022 in the number of media representatives who have faced verbal and physical attacks as well as arrest by the domestic intelligence service (ANR) on account of their coverage of current events in DR Congo. An increase in repressive measures against people critical of the government and dissidents was recently reported in the run-up to the elections planned for 2023 (cf. BN of 17.10.22). The disappearance of an international journalist has led to contradictory assertions. Reports citing national and international NGOs indicate that members of the ANR arrested Congolese journalist Steve Wembi in Kinshasa on unknown grounds on 25.10.22 and subsequently placed him in incommunicado detention at a secret location. This version of events has been dismissed as false rumours by Congolese government spokesperson Patrick Muyaya and subsequently also by the head of the NGO Journaliste en danger (JED). According to other sources, two members of Wembi's family and the journalist Pascal Mulegwa, a correspondent of French international broadcaster Radio France Internationale in Kinshasa, were temporarily detained by the ANR on the same day after attempting to obtain information about Wembi's fate. Mulegwa was allegedly subjected to excessive force during his arrest and a short period in secret service custody.

Press reports of media representatives facing repression, restrictions and various forms of harassment have been common in recent months, particularly in the country's crisis-ridden provinces.

Court of appeal overturns conviction of activist and La Véranda Mutsanga leader

On appeal by Fiston Isambiro, one of the leaders of the civil society youth group La Véranda Mutsanga in Beni, the military court of North Kivu has repealed the sentenced passed on 22.04.22 by the military court of first instance in Beni (North Kivu) and referred the case back to the lower court for a new hearing and decision. The court of first instance sentenced Isambiro, a civilian, to an unsuspended prison term of ten years for various military offences.

HRW: The situation of indigenous peoples

In a report published on 28.10.22, the NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) pointed out that indigenous groups remain exposed to lethal attacks throughout the country. HRW has documented the killing of 66 indigenous Iyeye, including at least 40 children, in the western Congolese province of Tshuapa in 2021, stressing that no one has been held to account for the massacre so far. According to various sources, between 700,000 and two million members of indigenous peoples live in DR Congo. According to HRW, indigenous peoples continue to be refused equality and fundamental rights, in addition to which they face various forms of discrimination, including from institutions. Their access to justice, healthcare and education is commonly restricted. The report further states that indigenous peoples continue to be refused access to their ancestral land or are driven from their land on economic grounds, without receiving any compensation. Indigenous peoples are also confronted with social exclusion and segregation in the face of persistent prejudice and stereotyping. The law to protect the rights of indigenous peoples in the DR Congo is still awaiting ratification by president Félix Tshisekedi.

Egypt

Political prisoner pardoned

According to information in the media, on 24.10.22 the authorities announced the release from prison of former parliamentarian and human rights lawyer Zyad El-Alaimy under a presidential pardon. The co-founder of the Social Democratic Party in Egypt was arrested together with seven other individuals in 2019, shortly after they had met with a number of opposition MPs and members of political parties with the aim of establishing a coalition to contest the parliamentary elections in 2020. El-Alaimy was subsequently convicted of charges including the dissemination of fake news which posed a threat to national security. The authorities have released numerous individuals from

prison under pardons in recent months (cf. BN of 25.04.22, 02.05.22, 30.05.22 and 19.09.22); human rights organisations estimate the number of political prisoners in Egyptian prisons at around 60,000.

Ethiopia

Peace talks between Ethiopia and Tigray

The peace negotiations between the Ethiopian and Tigrayan governments, which have been in progress in South Africa since 26.10.22, have been extended beyond their planned date for conclusion on 30.10.22.

No official announcements on the state of the negotiations have been forthcoming to date, as a news blackout has been imposed. A notable aspect is the fact that the Tigrayan delegation was flown from Mekelle to Pretoria on board a US military aircraft, for security reasons.

An agreement appears difficult, as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) is demanding the immediate cessation of fighting, unimpeded humanitarian access and the withdrawal of the Eritrean armed forces, although it is under military pressure following substantial territorial gains by the Ethiopian and Eritrean armed forces. Meanwhile, the Ethiopian government's goal is to completely disempower the TPLF, but it is in urgent need of economic support. The import of food and fuel has become markedly more expensive, due in part to the war in Ukraine, in addition to which the most severe drought for 40 years has left the population in the south of the country particularly reliant on humanitarian aid, while in the north some 13 million people are in need of support on account of the conflict. The international community is calling for an end to the fighting in Tigray as a precondition for further aid measures, however.

Fighting continues

Regardless of the peace negotiations, the fighting continues in Tigray. The Ethiopian and Eritrean armed forces have allegedly captured two further towns, Adwa and Adigrat – although this is disputed by Tigrayan sources – and are advancing in the direction of the regional capital, Mekelle. Ethiopia's air force has apparently stepped up its air raids, with unconfirmed reports of a number of civilian deaths. There are also reports of serious human rights violations occurring once again. According to Amnesty International, Eritrean armed forces were responsible for the extra-judicial killing of 40 people during their capture of the town of Shiraro (cf. BN of 24.10.22).

Attack by Amharic militia on Oromo claims many lives

According to reports in the Ethiopian media, members of the Amharic militia group Fano allegedly killed at least 30 people after attacking four villages in the woreda (district) of Kiremu in the East Welega Zone of the regional state of Oromia on 15.10.22. More than 50 houses were reportedly burned to the ground. Ethnic clashes between Oromo and Amhara are a common occurrence in the region. The Fano were allegedly responsible for the deaths of more than 60 people in the neighbouring Horo Guduru Welega Zone at the beginning of September 2022 (cf. BN of 05.09.22 and 10.10.22).

Gambia

NHRC: Sexualised and gender-specific violence, human trafficking, gender equality

The Chair of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Emmanuel Joof, has stated before the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that sexualised and gender-specific violence remain widespread and are surrounded by a culture of silence. The unwillingness of victims to disclose and report incidents is attributed to their fear of social stigmatisation or further reprisals or attacks in real life or in cyberspace. Joof reported that genital cutting and child marriages, both of which constitute punishable offences, remain widespread throughout the country in the absence of effective criminal prosecution. He added that the overall inadequate staffing, material and financial resources of the competent care and protective services prevented them from performing their tasks effectively. Joof called for effective implementation of the laws to counter sexualised and gender-specific violence and for rape within marriage to be defined as a criminal offence.

Joof further referred to challenges in the fight against widespread human trafficking (cf. BN of 18.07.22), including the continuing lack of adequate financial and technical resources for the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP).

He also pointed out that women continue to be under-represented in political and other high-ranking decision-making positions.

Guinea

Following demonstrations: Nine politicians under judicial supervision

Nine opposition politicians have been placed under judicial supervision, following the protests against the ruling military junta in Conakry on 20.10. and 21.10.22 (cf. BN of 24.10.22). This means that the individuals concerned, who include Mamadou Sylla, leader of the Union Démocratique de Guinée (UDG), and Fodé Oussou Fofana, deputy leader of the Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG), are required to present themselves to the court of first instance in Dixinn (Conakry) on a weekly basis. According to their legal representatives, they are accused of taking part in an illegal demonstration, aiding and abetting the destruction of public and private property and malicious injury - charges which they deny.

It has further been reported that justice minister Alphonse Charles Wright has ordered the criminal prosecution of those responsible for civilian deaths. A gendarme who can be seen using his gun at the demonstrations of 20./21.10.22 in a video which is circulating in social media has reportedly been arrested.

It has further been reported in the media that Oumar Sylla (known as Foniké Manguè) and Ibrahima Diallo, who were been detained in connection with earlier demonstrations (cf. BN v. 08.08.22), have announced they will be going on hunger strike from 07.11.22. They claim that charges have still to be brought against them and that their imprisonment has no legal basis.

India

Social media to be placed under government supervision

On 28.10.22 the Indian government announced new provisions to regulate social media platforms and streaming services. These provide for a government board to receive complaints from users about decisions by social media platforms with regard to the moderation of content. In other words, the government itself is to be granted moderation rights. The Internet Freedom Foundation described the planned board as a de facto state censorship body. The foundation argues that the existence of the board will induce platform operators to remove contributions which are displeasing to the government.

Iran

Protests continue despite warning from Revolutionary Guards

As protests against the Islamic leadership continue in numerous towns and cities, on 29.10.22 the commander of the Revolutionary Guard Corps (referred to in short as Sepah or Pasdaran), Hossein Salami, warned people against continuing to stage and participate in demonstrations. The Sepah/Pasdaran are an elite unit of the armed forces and far more important than the Iranian army. They are under the direct control of the supreme revolutionary leader, Ali Chamanei. The organisation has far-reaching political and economic influence in the country.

Foreign media report further protest actions, demonstrations and rallies on 30.10.22 in towns and cities including Tehran, Sanandaj (Kordestan), Shiraz (Fars), and in Qazvin and Hamadan (in the provinces of the same name). Students and teaching staff from numerous universities and educational establishments reportedly had a particularly large presence at these events. Tear gas and violence were reportedly once again used against demonstrators, including by units of the Basij volunteer militia in plain clothes. Higher education centres and student hostels in Tehran are reported to have been besieged by security forces. It has been reported in the media that at least twelve people were killed in protest actions in Kurdish towns and cities between 26.10. and 28.10.22. According to unconfirmed reports, protesters were shot at in the city of Mahabad (West Azerbaijan) on 27.10.22 when they tried to occupy government facilities. Demonstrators were allegedly also shot at and killed in the city of

Zahedan (Sistan and Baluchistan province) on the night of 27.10.22. The local police chief was subsequently fired, as this followed in the wake of killings in disturbances in Zahedan at the end of September 2022. Human rights organisations put the death toll in these disturbances at a minimum of 60. Internet connections continue to be restricted throughout the country.

Under a new bill, security forces are to receive higher wages in future. According to reports in the media, the parliament in Tehran approved a pay increase of 20 % on 30.10.22.

Arrest of rapper with criminal record

Citing state news agencies, foreign media report that well-known regime critic and musician Tomaj Salehi was arrested while attempting to leave the country illegally via the western national border in Charmahal and Bakhtiari province and has been remanded in custody. The rapper is accused of calling for violence during the ongoing protests. He was previously arrested in 2021 and in May 2022 on charges of insulting the revolutionary leader and disseminating propaganda against the regime, and was sentenced to six months in prison and a fine. The prison term was commuted into a one-year suspended sentence. He regularly denounces suppression, corruption and misgovernment in the Islamic Republic in his songs (cf. BN of 16.05.22).

Attack on pilgrimage site in Shiraz: at least 15 dead

According to reports in the media, at least 15 people died in an attack on the Shiite pilgrimage site of Shah Tsheragh in Shiraz (Fars province) on 25.10.22. Several people were reportedly injured. According to official information from the local judicial authorities, three people who have been identified as Sunni jihadist terrorists were involved in the attack. IS has reportedly claimed responsibility for the attack on a channel of the Telegram social network. Such attacks are rare in Iran. Against this background, however, state media have reported that knife attacks on two Shiite clerics took place at the beginning of 2022. President Ebrahim Raisi has announced that there would be a response to the attack in Shiraz, without going into any further details. The Iranian leadership denies any link between the attack and the current protests.

Iraq

Gas tank explodes in Baghdad

At least nine people were killed and 13 injured when a gas tank exploded in a residential area of Baghdad on 30.10.22. Most of the victims were amateur footballers who were on their way to a sports field in the neighbouring area. Security regulations pertaining to construction work and the storage of hazardous substances are commonly ignored in Iraq, and a number of arrests have previously been made in this connection.

New government

The new government, comprising 21 ministers under prime minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, was ratified by parliament on 27.10.22. This marks the end of the political blockade for the time being, following one year of caretaker government. Al-Sudani has the support above all of a number of pro-Iranian parties. He has promised to organise new elections in the space of a year.

Death sentence for murderer of Thaeer at-Tayeb

On 25.10.22 the supreme criminal court passed the death sentence on the murderer of well-known activist Thaeer at-Tayeb, who was killed in his car by an explosive device on 15.12.19. The conviction came on the third anniversary of the escalation of the Tishreen protests. On 25.10.19, demonstrations throughout Iraq were attacked by members of the security forces, some of whom remain unknown. At least 40 people died. Key demands of the demonstrators are justice for those killed in the demonstrations and the solving of the murders which took place in this context.

Lebanon

Economic situation

A meeting between president-elect Mikati and representatives of the World Bank took place on 25.10.22. The World Bank indicated a willingness to fund a number of projects in the social area and to ensure a sustained food

supply to the amount of up to US\$ 500 million. At the same time, it was also pointed out that funds earmarked for the import of gas from Egypt can still not be released because the required reforms have yet to be implemented in full.

In large areas of the country, the electricity supply continues to be restricted to a maximum of two hours a day. Water pumps also break down on a regular basis in many regions, as a result of which the supply of drinking water also remains highly restricted.

Maritime borders

The agreement on maritime borders between Lebanon and Israel was adopted on 27.10.22. This has prompted Lebanon to address unresolved maritime border issues with the two other bordering countries, Cyprus and Syria. A Cypriot delegation visited Lebanon for preliminary talks on 29.10.22. Both sides envisage resolving the issues concerned as being a markedly simpler process than applied in the case of Israel and Lebanon.

Power vacuum

Michel Aoun, the president of Lebanon, left Baabda Palace, the residence of the Lebanese president, on 30.10.22. His term in office ends on 31.10.22. He described forming a new government during his term as president as an “impossible” task, stating that the leaders of the various groups that yield power in Lebanon were barely able to speak to one another. Four attempts to elect a successor have failed so far. This results in a further power vacuum to compound the precarious political situation.

Myanmar

Air raid on concert in Kachine State claims at least 60 lives

On 24.10.22 Myanmar’s military junta launched an air raid on a concert which was being held in Hpakant township to mark the 62nd anniversary of the founding of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO). At least sixty people were killed. The KIO champions the rights of the Kachin ethnic group in Myanmar. It has been fighting the military for decades and supports putchists. Serious violence and repression by the junta has been on the increase in former Burma since a military coup in February 2021.

Niger

Deadly attacks in the south-west

Nine people, including two police officers, died in an attack on a police station in the Tillabéri region close to the border with Burkina Faso on 24.10.22. This emerges from media reports citing official information released by the Nigerien defence ministry on 25.10.22. The attack occurred in the town of Tamou in the south-west of the country. Military equipment was reportedly stolen in the attack. Seven of the attackers have allegedly been killed in air strikes launched by the military in response to the attack, which the defence ministry describes as an act of terrorism. On 22.10.22 at least eleven civilians died in attacks by suspected Islamists near to the town of Banibangou, which is also located in the Tillabéri region, close to the border with Mali (cf. BN of 24.10.22).

Nigeria

North-west: Military kills dozens of gang members

The Nigerian air force bombed the camp of a criminal group in the north of Zamfara State on 21.10.22. According to reports in the media, at least 30 people died in the air strikes. The dead were reportedly followers of arms smuggler Halilu Sububu, who also goes by the names of Kachalla Halilu Sububu Seno and Halilu Rocket. The media report many acts of violence by the group, in particular attacks on villages, cattle theft and kidnapping with the aim of extorting ransom money. Since the beginning of 2022, the Nigerian government has described and treated such groups as terrorists (cf. BN of 10.01.22). The terms “bandits” and “militiamen” are sometimes used in the media. Military air strikes with high death tolls are common in both the north-west (cf. BN of 15.08.22, 19.09.22 and 17.10.22) and the north-east of Nigeria (cf. BN of 28.02.22, 08.08.22 and 05.09.22).

Inmates awaiting trial make up around 68 % of the total prison population

51,541 of the 75,635 prisoners in Nigerian prisons have not been convicted of any crimes, but are so-called “awaiting trial inmates” (ATIs) who in some cases spend years in prison waiting for their trials to get underway. This emerges from media reports on 09.10.22 citing information from interior minister Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola. He is of the view that the sheer number of inmates alone poses a threat to security at the country’s 253 penal institutions. In a number of instances, no case files exist. Aregbesola suggests that around 30 % of all prisoners should be released, stating that it is time for a general review of the criminal justice system.

North Macedonia

President Pendarovski condemns violent attack on journalist

Well-known journalist and internet blogger Zoran Bozinovski was attacked by unknown masked men outside his house in his home town of Bitola on 25.10.22. According to a recent report in the media, Bozinovski, whose political blog includes subject matter such as corruption at the highest level and political scandals, was treated in hospital for injuries to his face and head but was discharged on the following day. On the day after the incident, president Stevo Pendarovski stressed in a press statement that North Macedonia is a country governed by the rule of law in which human rights and liberties are protected. He said violence against any citizens, whatever their occupation, was unacceptable and called for an effective investigation. Official investigations into the act of violence, which also promptly drew strong condemnation from politicians, trade unions and the journalists’ association, are still in progress, according to the police.

Macedonians in Ohrid demonstrate against name of Bulgarian cultural association

It has been reported in the media that some 100 demonstrators protested against the opening of a club belonging to a Bulgarian cultural association on 07.10.22, because the club has been named after the Bulgarian tsar “Boris III”. Scuffles with the police also occurred in the course of the demonstration. Parts of the Macedonian population reportedly sees the name as a provocation, as Bulgaria was allied with Nazi Germany during this tsar’s reign. For their part, many Bulgarians are apparently upset that the tsar is described in North Macedonian school books as a “fascist Bulgarian occupier”. A press report views the annoyance among the population of Macedonian origin as highlighting the continuing tensions between the neighbouring Balkan country of Bulgaria and North Macedonia over the issues of identity, language and their common history.

Pakistan

Former prime minister calls for march on Islamabad once again

On 28.10.22 former prime minister Imran Khan called for a march on the capital, Islamabad, to lend weight to his demand for new elections (cf. BN of 24.10.22). Khan first of all gathered supporters in the city of Lahore. These are to join the caravan of cars and trucks to drive from Lahore to the capital, 380 kilometres away. In the course of the week it is expected that thousands of people will join the convoy, which will make stops en route to stage rallies and mobilise further demonstrators. Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e Insaaf party (PTI) has filed an application with the authorities for a sit-down strike in the capital. Security measures have been stepped up in Islamabad and shipping containers have been installed at key transport hubs. Clashes between demonstrators and security forces occurred during a comparable march in May 2022.

TTP attack on security forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

On 28.10.22 fighters of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacked security forces who were escorting an investigation team in the flood-affected area in the Dera Ismail Khan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. At least two members of the security forces were killed and two injured.

Attack on polio vaccination team in Balochistan

On 25.10.22 unknown attackers shot dead a police officer who was escorting a polio vaccination team in the Pishin district of Balochistan. The team remained unharmed. The two attackers fled on a motorcycle.

Palestinian territories / Israel

West Bank: Five Lions' Den members killed, deaths in attacks and clashes with the military

According to information from the Palestinian health ministry, five Palestinians were killed in Nablus in the course of an operation by the Israeli military on the night of 24.10.22. Reports in the media mention a large-scale explosion in the area of the city's old quarter during the operation, whose target was the armed "Lions' Den" group. The military stated that it had destroyed an arms factory in an apartment by means of an explosion. The Israeli authorities claim that the group's leader was among the dead. On the following day, large numbers of Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip participated in a general strike as a sign of protest at the killings. Protests occurred in the Gaza Strip at the border with Israel.

A Palestinian was killed near to the village of Nabi Saleh on 25.10.22. According to the military, he had thrown incendiaries at members of the military in the course of an operation.

On 28.10.22 two Palestinians were killed and one injured in an exchange of fire with the Israeli military to the south of the city of Nablus. According to information from the military, soldiers who had been fired at from a passing car opened fire on two suspect vehicles. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade announced that members of the group were involved in the incident.

According to information from the Israeli military, a Palestinian killed an Israeli with a firearm in the vicinity of the Israeli settlement of Kiryat Arba, near to the city of Hebron in the south of the West Bank, on 29.10.22. Other civilians were wounded when the attacker opened fire on a group of Israelis before being shot dead by security personnel. Hamas announced that the attacker was one of its members. Only two days later, the military made preparations for the house of the attacker's family in Hebron to be demolished.

On 30.10.22 the Israeli military and armed civilians shot dead a Palestinian after he had driven his car into a group of soldiers, according to information from the armed forces. Five members of the military incurred minor to moderately severe injuries.

More than 130 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military in the West Bank in 2022. According to the armed forces, most of those killed were members of militant groups, although the death toll also includes people who threw stones at the military in clashes. The UN has warned that should this trend continue, this will represent the most lethal year for Palestinians in the West Bank since records began in 2005.

Republic of the Congo

Prison conditions remain bad

The Congolese Human Rights Observatory (OCDH) reported on 26.10.22 that there had been no improvement to conditions in the country's prisons. Conditions in the country's overcrowded prisons and specifically at the police detention centre in the capital, Brazzaville, are repeatedly and unanimously described as harsh, and deaths among the prison population as a result of torture and violence or inadequate or lacking medical care, for example, have become publicly known (cf. BN of 04.04.22, 28.02.22, 13.12.21 and 04.10.21).

Republic of Moldova

Arrests during protests

According to reports in the media, demonstrators were arrested during protests in the centre of the capital, Chişinău, on 30.10.22. The police allege that the arrested individuals had behaved aggressively and destabilised the situation. Demonstrations have been taking place in Chişinău for some weeks now in protest at various issues, including the critical state of the economy and the energy supply situation in the country (cf. BN of 24.10.22).

Russian Federation

Defence minister announces end of partial mobilisation

On 28.10.22 defence minister Shoigu stated that the conscription of 300,000 reservists which was ordered at the end of September 2022 to reinforce the Russian forces in the war in Ukraine had been completed (cf. BN of 26.09.22)

and 17.10.22). 82,000 of the mobilised reservists have allegedly already been dispatched to the war zone. According to Shoigu, no further mobilisation is planned. Rather, military recruitment is to be restricted to volunteers again in future. Various independent media sources, including the Mediazona news site, estimate the actual number of people who have been mobilised so far at around 500,000 at least. There are also reports, which vary greatly according to region, that reservists are continuing to receive call-up papers and the police are carrying out checks to identify people who fail to comply with the call-up. In this context, human rights lawyers point out that the mobilisation can only be ended by a corresponding presidential decree, which means that the military commissariats can resume mobilisation at any time, including in those regions in which the conscription measures are currently supposed to be suspended, such as the Moscow, Krasnodar and Rostov regions.

Jehovah's Witness sentenced to prison terms

On 25.10.22 a court in the Amur region in the Russian Far East sentenced each of three Jehovah's Witnesses to six and a half years in prison. In connection with the practice of their faith, the court found the men guilty of organising and participating in activities of an extremist organisation and of recruiting new members (Art. 282.2 of the Russian criminal code). A fourth Jehovah's witness received a prison term of six years and two months. Three other members of the religious communities received six-year prison terms at the beginning of October 2022.

Criminal prosecutions of believers have been a common occurrence since the supreme court banned the Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist organisation in April 2017.

Somalia

Freedom of the press

According to the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) and the Somali Media Association (SOMA), attacks on media representatives by government agencies have increased since tougher action against media with regard to reporting on Al-Shabaab was announced (cf. BN of 10.10.22). Five journalists have been arrested to date. SJS secretary-general Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, who was re-arrested two days after his initial arrest (cf. BN of 17.10.22 and 24.10.22), was released on bail on 22.10.22 due to a deterioration in his state of health.

Executions

Two IS fighters convicted of carrying out murders on behalf of Al-Shabaab were reportedly executed by a firing squad in Mogadishu on 26.10.22. The two were allegedly involved in a series of murders of civilians and government staff. The execution of two other convicted Al-Shabaab fighters is reported to have taken place several days earlier.

Bomb attacks in Mogadishu claim more than 100 lives

It has been reported that at least 100 people were killed and more than 300 injured when two car bombs exploded outside the education ministry in Mogadishu on 29.10.22. Most of the victims were apparently civilians. The second bomb exploded just after first-aiders had arrived. The attack took place during a three-day government conference at which an intensification of efforts to fight Al-Shabaab was under discussion. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack. According to official information, this represents the most serious attack since 2017, when a truck loaded with explosives blew up at the same spot, killing more than 500 people, most of whom were civilians.

Sudan

Further demonstrations

The previously announced demonstrations took place in nine of Sudan's federal states on 25.10.22, which marked the anniversary of the military coup. In all, several hundred thousand people are reported to have participated in the demonstrations. Despite numerous road blocks, in the capital thousands of people proceeded in the direction of the presidential palace. The security forces attempted to block their progress using tear gas, flash grenades, rubber bullets and acoustic weapons (so-called "sound bombs"). It has further been reported in the media that internet services were blocked nationwide until the evening.

The Committee of Sudanese Doctors stated that a person who was hit by two shots from the security forces died during the demonstrations in Khartoum's sister city of Omdurman.

The Sudanese police alleged in a statement that rebels and sleeper cells were present among the demonstrators and that these had carried out attacks on military facilities. They also claimed that the demonstrators had behaved in the manner of units with military training. On the basis of these claims, the police have called for more extensive rights to take action against this course of development. No evidence was presented to substantiate the assertions, however. The police statement sparked severe criticism from the fields of politics, journalism and among legal actors. The police are accused of seeking to justify even more violent action in future by way of this argumentation. Further demonstrations occurred on 27.10.22 in North Khartoum (Bari), Omdurman and other districts of the capital. According to reports in the media, the security forces again responded with violence and the use of tear gas, causing injuries to a number of people. The demonstrators called for the military to be fully excluded from the government.

Attempts by the UN to mediate led to a demonstration attended by thousands of people in Khartoum on 29.10.22. The demonstrators voiced criticism of the UN's special envoy for Sudan and support for former president Al-Bashir. They denounced the UN's attempts to mediate as foreign intervention and called for the introduction of Islamic law in the country.

There are reports in the media of further demonstrations against the military coup on 30.10.22. These demonstrations are said to have taken place in Khartoum and 16 other towns and cities in the country. It is alleged that the security forces again used force against the demonstrators. In the capital, two journalists were reportedly injured by tear gas and flash grenades. The Sudanese Journalist Syndicate accused the security forces of continual violent action against peaceful demonstrators and of specifically targeting journalists.

Syria

UN special envoy: Conflict remains "very active"

In a statement before the UN Security Council on 26.10.22, the UN special envoy for Syria bemoaned continuing violence, an outbreak of cholera and the worst economic crisis since the beginning of the conflict in Syria. He reported that more than 24,000 suspected cases of cholera and at least 80 deaths in connection with cholera had been documented to date. In addition, he noted that the Syrian pound had again incurred a substantial drop in value, driving up the price of food and fuel to new record levels.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), food shortages are rampant, with people in Syria now only able to afford 15 % of what they spent on food three years ago.

Organised return from Lebanon

Lebanese authorities report that more than 2,400 people registered for an organised return to Syria on 24.10.22. Only 1,700 received the necessary permit from the Syrian side, however, and others decided against embarking on the return journey at short notice, as a result of which the final list only contained around 750 names.

According to Syrian state media, ambulances awaited the returnees from Lebanon on the other side of the border, with medicine and food packages.

Abbas Ibrahim, head of the Lebanese authority for general security, said at a press conference on 25.10.22 that more than two million Syrians were living in Lebanon. According to the UNHCR, at least 76,500 have returned to Syria from Lebanon voluntarily since 2016. The UN organisation is not involved in carrying out organised return processes.

Meanwhile, the Access Center for Human Rights, a human rights organisation based in Lebanon, states that 141 cases of non-voluntary return to Syria from Lebanon have already been documented in the year to date. The Lebanese government rejects such accusations.

Türkiye

Media representatives arrested

Security forces carried out simultaneous raids in Ankara, Istanbul and five other cities on 25.10.22, arresting eleven journalists who work for pro-Kurdish media on suspicion of their having links to the PKK. The police confirmed the arrests and stated that the suspects had been detained on account of their journalistic articles, which allegedly incite hate and enmity in the public. In a statement from the police authority in Ankara, the raids were described as an “anti-terrorism operation”. The Mezopotamya news agency in particular was accused of serving as the PKK’s “press council”. The media report that the arrests took place only a few days after the government had ratified a controversial new media law under which the offence of “spreading disinformation” is punishable with imprisonment (cf. BN of 17.10.22 and 24.10.22).

Human rights activist arrested

The human rights activist and president of the Turkish medial association (Türk Tabipleri Birliği, TTB), Şebnem Korur Fincancı, was arrested in Istanbul on 26.10.22. Fincancı is accused of disseminating “propaganda for a terrorist organisation”. According to reports in the media, a number of opposition figures, including Fincancı, accused the Turkish military last week of having used chemical weapons against PKK fighters in northern Iraq and called for an independent inquiry.

Ukraine / Russian Federation

Attacks on energy infrastructure continue

On the morning of 31.10.22 the authorities in various parts of the country reported renewed attacks on energy supply facilities, including in the cities of Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Kryvyi Rih, Svitlovodsk and in the Cherkasy and Poltava regions. The local authorities in the capital, Kiev, reported a partial failure of the water and electricity supply as a result of a number of detonations. The Ukrainian president’s office announced that further emergency power cuts are to be imposed, following the shelling of critical infrastructure. Power failures, in some cases on a large scale, have been prevalent in recent weeks as a result of war-related events (cf. BN of 24.10.22). President Zelenskyy stated on 29.10.22 that around four million people throughout Ukraine were affected by power restrictions, in particular in the cities of Kiev and Kharkiv and the surrounding areas.

General military and humanitarian situation

On 29.10.22 the Russian Federation announced its decision to suspend the agreement with Ukraine to enable Ukrainian grain exports, which was brokered by the UN and Türkiye in July 2022. The measure was justified as a response to alleged Ukrainian attacks on Russia’s Black Sea fleet. According to information from the Ukrainian authorities, five civilians were killed on 29.10.22 against the backdrop of continuing fighting along the front line in the Donetsk region, in addition to which five dead bodies have been discovered. In all, the authorities report that at least 1,125 people have been killed and 2,499 injured since the beginning of the Russian attack in the Donetsk region. Information released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on 24.10.22 puts the death toll throughout Ukraine since 24.02.22 at 6,374 at least and the number of civilians injured at 9,776.

Venezuela

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press: Closures of radio stations

A report published by the national press union (SNTP) on 28.10.22 claims that almost 80 radio stations in 16 of the country’s federal states were closed by the national telecommunications commission (Conatel) between January and October 2022. The states with the highest numbers of station closures were Zulia (23), Sucre (11), Táchira (10), Cojedes and Falcón (6 each). The closure instructions were generally issued on the telephone or verbally and without any fair procedural safeguards, such as the possibility of filing an objection to the decision. By way of explanation for the closures, in most instances the regulatory authority only briefly referred to the broadcasting licence having allegedly expired or lapsed, without providing any further details.

Yemen

Contaminated medicines: at least ten children dead

It emerged in October 2022 that contaminated medicines had been used to treat children suffering from leukaemia in several hospitals in the capital, Sanaa. The competent authorities state that ten people have died in this connection, while unofficial sources claim a death toll of at least 19. The medicines were brought into the country by smuggling networks. Yemen imports 100 % of its medicines from abroad. Due to the years of conflict, air and sea blockades and internal restrictions on free movement, the official imports are unable to meet the prevailing needs, however. The black market is often the only resort for people in need of medication.

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