



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Security situation: Isolated attacks on Taliban, attack on mosque in Kabul

The National Resistance Front (NRF) announced on 22.11.22 that it had killed two Taliban commanders in Kandahar province. The minister of agriculture appointed by the Taliban in Kunar province was also killed on 21.11.22. Reports in the media allude to internal conflicts within the Taliban, but the exact circumstances remain unclear. An armed man forced his way into a mosque in Kabul during morning prayers on 23.11.22 and shot six people dead. According to information from the Taliban, the attack related to a private conflict.

Persecution: Arrests, increase in whippings, Taliban attack on village in Daykundi

The Taliban arrested a former member of the army in Faryab province on 22.11.22, accusing him of having collaborated with the CIA. Two people, including three women, were publicly whipped for various offences in a stadium in Puli Alam, capital of Logar province, on 23.11.22. Public whippings have also taken place in other provinces. The Taliban have defended the official re-introduction of whipping as part of their criminal justice system. The number of whippings has increased sharply since emir Akhundzada made this form of punishment mandatory for courts throughout the country (cf. BN of 21.11.22 and 15.11.22). Women's protests against the Taliban took place once again in Kabul on 24.11.22. On 25.11.22 the Taliban attacked a village in Daykundi province, killing at least eleven people and injuring three (including women and children). According to the Taliban, disputes had arisen between two rival clans. They also claim to have arrested other persons. Other sources allege that those arrested were also tortured by the Taliban. Former vice-president Danish has referred to the incident as a "massacre" and called on the international community to investigate the matter.

Humanitarian situation

A report released by the World Bank on 22.11.22 states that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains bad. According to the report, two thirds of households do not have sufficient financial means to cover basic needs. A further deterioration of the situation is expected.

Benin

Military kills four attackers

On 25.11.22 the army repelled an attack by around a dozen men on a military post in Kaobagou, near to the border with Burkina Faso, killing four armed attackers. This emerges from media reports citing military information. The unknown attackers reportedly left large quantities of weapons and ammunition behind during their retreat. Jihadist groups, armed gangs of smugglers and other criminals all pose a threat to security in the region. Security forces in the border territories in the north have been the target of attacks in numerous instances since the end of 2021 (cf. BN of 10.01.22, 27.06.22 and 17.10.22). According to the military, more than 20 such incidents have occurred.

Burkina Faso

Two attacks in the north claim at least 14 lives

At least 14 people, including eight civilian army personnel belonging to the Volunteers for the Defence of the Fatherland (VDP), an auxiliary force founded to support the army in December 2019, were killed in two separate attacks by jihadist groups in the north of the country on 21.11.22, according to information released by the security forces and local sources on 22.11.22. A further six civilians have been killed near to the town of Markoye, which is also situated in the north of the country. According to reports in the press, jihadist attacks have increased in recent months, above all in the north and east of the country. The worsening of the country's security situation serves to justify the two coups in 2022. In the first putsch in January 2022, a military junta led by lieutenant-colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba toppled the elected president, Roch Marc Christian Kabore. The second putsch, in September 2022, brought captain Ibrahim Traore to power when he and his supporters deposed Damiba. Jihadist attacks have been a regular occurrence in Burkina Faso since 2015, in the course of which thousands of people have been killed to date and some two million people have been forced to flee their homes.

Chad

Attack by Boko Haram claims lives

An attack by Boko Haram on a military unit in the Lake Chad region on 22.11.22 reportedly claimed the lives of between 20 and 40 members of the armed forces and a number of civilians. The Lake Chad region serves as a retreat for radical Islamist groups such as Boko Haram, which regularly attacks army bases as well as the civilian population in this region.

China

Nationwide protests following deaths in apartment block fire in Ürümqi

A fire broke out in an apartment block in Ürümqi on 24.11.22, killing ten people and injuring nine, according to official figures. Hospital staff and local police reported that around 40 Uyghurs had died. The victims were unable to leave the building due to physical barriers erected by the authorities in connection with the COVID-19 lockdown which has been in force since the beginning of August 2022. The fire brigade access road was obstructed by road blocks and cars with flat batteries. Hundreds of people gathered outside the government building in Ürümqi on the same evening to demonstrate for an end to the lockdown. Vigils were held for the victims of the fire in numerous cities throughout China between 25.11. and 28.11.22, including Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Nanjing, Wuhan, Xi'an, Lanzhou and Dali. The gatherings escalated into protests which were attended by thousands of people in some instances. In Shanghai and Beijing, for example, the protesters also called for freedom of speech, democracy, the resignation of president Xi Jinping and the overthrow of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Dozens of demonstrators were arrested, as was at least one internet user who had refuted the official version of the events in Ürümqi in a group chat. A reporter from the BBC was also detained. Prior to the incident in Ürümqi, factory employees clashed with security forces at a smartphone production plant in Zhengzhou on 23.11.22. The employees had been prohibited from leaving the factory for weeks due to a COVID-19 outbreak and were demanding better working conditions in protests which became violent in part.

Colombia

Resumption of peace talks between government and ELN

Chief negotiators of the Colombian government and the National Liberation Army guerilla group (ELN) resumed peace talks on 21.11.22 (cf. BN of 10.10.22). According to information from the government, the talks will take place in the so-called guarantor countries of Venezuela, Cuba and Norway. Both sides further agreed on 25.11.22 to invite Brazil, Chile and Mexico to peace talks as further guarantor countries. Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain are also to oversee the negotiations and the USA is to appoint a special envoy.

Côte d'Ivoire

Blé Goudé returns

Charles Blé Goudé, who was charged along with Laurent Gbagbo and subsequently acquitted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) together with Gbagbo (cf. BN of 02.08.21, 12.04.21 and 19.01.19), returned to the country on 26.11.22. Blé Goudé was arrested in Ghana in January 2013 on suspicion of crimes against humanity. He was on Gbagbo's side in the conflict over the outcome of the 2010 presidential elections, which claimed some 3,000 lives. The former minister's ability to mobilise forces earned him the name "street general".

In 2019 Blé Goudé was sentenced in Côte d'Ivoire in absentia to 20 years in prison, similarly to Gbagbo, who has since been pardoned (cf. BN of 08.08.22). It has further been reported in the media that president Alassane Ouattara approved Blé Goudé's return, after he had been kept waiting for a passport to be issued. He has announced that he is returning on a permanent basis. Blé Goudé was celebrated by large numbers of supporters at a reception in the Abidjan district of Yopougon. He underscored his support for national reconciliation, while at the same time indicating ambitions for the presidential office.

DR Congo

Internally displaced persons dying for lack of basic necessities and medical care; internally displaced children

Recent press reports attribute a number of deaths at various camps for people displaced by the conflicts in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri and the western province of Kwilu to the precarious living conditions, food and healthcare situations at the camps.

Seven children and one woman have reportedly died as a result of medical neglect and catastrophic living conditions at the informal Kanyaruchinya camp in Nyirangongo Territory (North Kivu), approx. 20 km behind the front lines of the fighting with the Mouvement 23- Mars rebel group (M23) (cf. BN of 21.11.22). The extremely densely populated camp, in which an estimated 40,000 internally displaced people from Rutshuru Territory are believed to be living, is reportedly confronted with a continual influx of further displaced people from the territory, which is largely under the control of the M23 rebels.

There have also been deaths attributable to malnourishment, a lack of basic necessities and inadequate medical care at various camps for internally displaced people in Djugu Territory (Ituri). At the Djaiba camp for displaced people in Djugu Territory (Ituri), which has an estimated population of 10,000, the death toll since September 2022 is reported to have risen by a further 14 people to 44. There is a particular prevalence of children among the dead. Child deaths have also recently been reported from the Lodha camp for displaced people in Djugu. The extremely bad living conditions at both camps have already led to deaths in the past. In addition, the ethnic factions of the Coopérative de développement du Congo (CODECO) militia have reportedly threatened or already attacked the two camps. CODECO, which is among the most dangerous non-state armed groups in eastern Congo, is frequently accused of carrying out attacks aimed specifically at camps for displaced people in Djugu (cf. BN of 07.02.22 and 13.06.22).

Four deaths have been reported in the city of Bandundu (Kwilu), where an estimated 9,000 internally displaced people are believed to be living. These have fled interethnic conflicts either in Kwamouth Territory (Maï-Ndombe) or Bagata (Kwilu) (cf. BN of 14.11.22). The precarious living conditions for internally displaced people in the two western Congolese provinces of Maï-Ndombe and Kwilu had already claimed lives prior to the latest deaths (cf. BN of 17.10.22).

UNICEF warned on 07.11.22 that the precarious conditions in the heavily overcrowded and unhygienic camps for internally displaced people posed a serious threat to the health and lives of thousands of children while also exposing them to an increased risk of gender-based violence.

Equatorial Guinea

Long-time ruler Mbasogo remains in power

According to official information released by the electoral commission on 26.11.22, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo was confirmed in office in the presidential, parliamentary and local government elections which

were held on 20.11.22. 94.9 % of the electorate are reported to have voted for the 80 year-old. The two rival candidates trailed far behind. Turn-out allegedly stood at around 98 %. According to official information, Obiang's party, Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial (PDGE), won all seats in both chambers of parliament. The PDGE will also make up the governments at local level. Mbasogo has been in power continuously since 1979. Human rights organisations describe Equatorial Guinea as highly repressive (cf. BN of 10.10.22). The announcement that the death penalty was to be abolished prompted positive reactions (cf. BN of 26.09.22).

The Gambia

Challenges in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence

At the kick-off event for "SpeakOut", an educational and awareness campaign against widespread sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) which is being supported by the Ministry for Women, Children and Social Welfare and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), a number of participants drew attention to the challenges which apply in this context. SGBV is surrounded by a culture of silence and widespread impunity (cf. BN of 23.05.22 and 19.04.21). Few incidents are reported in the area of gender-based violence, in addition to which the proportion of the few reported cases actually leading to convictions is low. Speakers pointed out that SGBV affects women and girls for the most part, but sometimes also boys. SGBV takes place in the victims' social environments and sometimes also at school. Various factors affect victims' willingness to disclose and report incidents. Negative attitudes towards women persist in the country's patriarchal society. Victims are disbelieved and are increasingly subjected to abuse in social media. Citing the Demographic Health Survey 2019-2020, the coordinator of the Network Against Gender-Based Violence, Fallou Sowe, stated that the prevalence of gender-based violence had increased markedly in recent years. While a total of 533 SGBV cases were reported at the NGBV's one-stop centres in 2021 as a whole, the corresponding figure for the third quarter of 2022 alone stands at 642 cases. According to women's rights campaigner Aisha Baldeh, a hotline set up for victims of domestic and gender-based violence received over 10,000 calls in the period from July 2021 to June 2022. She said that some victims had obtained access to benefits as a result of calling the hotline.

Guinea

New dialogue format: Participants and refuseniks

A new forum for dialogue was opened on 24.11.22 in the presence of the mediator from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other dignitaries, including the EU and US ambassadors. The new forum is intended to define the framework for the 24-month transition phase which is to begin in January 2023 and to which the ruling junta has agreed under pressure from ECOWAS (cf. BN of 24.10.22). The format, which is referred to as "cadre de dialogue interguinéen", is to continue until 15.12.22. According to reports in the media, numerous parties and civil society organisations are taking part. The important coalition Alliance Nationale pour l'Alternance et la Démocratie (ANAD), the former governing party Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée (RPG) and the Front National de Défense de la Constitution (FNDC) have declined to participate, having made their involvement dependent on ten pre-conditions. Prime minister Bernard Goumou, who entered office in the summer of 2022, initially as deputy before taking over from Mohamed Béavogui on a permanent basis, and who is coordinating the dialogue together with the ECOWAS mediator, stated that the door remained open at all times, should any of the declining parties wish to join in the dialogue.

Iran

Protests: Several people injured in Sistan and Baluchestan province

Foreign media report further protests involving casualties in towns and cities in Sistan and Baluchestan province on 25.11.22. Security forces reportedly fired at protesters in the provincial capital, Zahedan, and in Khash, injuring a number of people. No precise figures are available. Images in social media show demonstrators blocking a number of streets and starting fires in Zahedan. Street protests reportedly also occurred in the cities of Chabahar, Iranshahr and Saravan, as well as in other provinces.

In a television address on 26.11.22, the country's religious and political leader, Ali Khamenei, stressed his support for the Basij forces (voluntary militia deployed to fight the uprising), acknowledging their commitment and the protection they were providing against rioters during the continuing protests.

Brief arrests of prominent figures critical of the system

According to press reports on 21.11. and 24.11.22, two actresses and a well-known footballer and former international have been arrested. The two women were incriminated independently of one another on account of their having expressed support for the continuing protest movement in social networks and foreign media. They were accused of having presented themselves without a headscarf and of having jeopardised the country's national security. One of the two women has reportedly since been released.

The footballer and former international has apparently since been released on bail. He is reportedly accused of propaganda activities against the system and of having insulted the Iranian national football team. The footballer, who is of Kurdish origin, has criticised the Iranian government in the past, particularly in connection with discrimination against women. In the course of the recent ongoing protests he has repeatedly made a public stand and condemned violent actions against demonstrators by the police and security forces. According to reports on 27.11.22, a niece of the supreme religious leader, Ali Khamenei, has also been arrested for publicly voicing criticism of the leadership in Tehran.

UN adopts resolution to investigate state violence in protests

In response to a motion tabled by Germany and Iceland, on 24.11.22 the UN Human Rights Council resolved with 25 votes in favour (six votes against, 16 abstentions) to establish an independent commission to investigate the Iranian leadership's violent actions against demonstrators during the latest ongoing protests. Experts are to document violations of human rights and secure evidence for this purpose. It remains unclear whether and when this might take place. Iran sharply criticised the resolution, which it sees as a consequence of misinformation in western media coverage. It has announced that national investigations are to be held instead.

Iraq

Turkish offensive and Iranian attacks

Following indications of a broadening of Turkish military operations in the north of Iraq, the government heads of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) jointly condemned the violation of Iraq's sovereignty at a meeting on 22.11.22. An Iranian drone strike on a military facility of an Iranian Kurdish party in Prde occurred on the same day.

On 23.11.22 the cabinet discussed redeploying forces to the border region with Türkiye and Iran.

On 26.11.22 the Turkish general staff stated that three more soldiers had been killed in fighting with the PKK in northern Iraq. The "neutralisation" of 13 PKK members was announced on 27.11.22.

Lebanon

Economic situation

On 22.11.22 the WFP stated that it would be increasing its support for Lebanon for the next three years by US\$ 500 million, to USD 1.8 billion annually. To date, the WFP has been providing support first and foremost for Syrians (around 70 % of those receiving assistance are Syrians). Following the increase in the volume of support, the scope of those entitled to assistance is also to be broadened.

On 23.11.22, three banks in different regions were once again raided by customers demanding that their savings be paid out. Two cases concerned the financing of operations for close relatives, while the third case related to the payment of study fees for a son in the USA.

On the same day, the central bank announced that the exchange rate for withdrawing dollar deposits in Lebanese pounds was to be raised to 1:15.000 with effect from 01.02.23. In view of the floating exchange rate, this means that a substantial proportion of buying power will be lost when withdrawing dollar deposits.

On 24.11.22 the association of hospital operators announced that treatment for dialysis and chemotherapy patients would soon only be possible on account, if the health ministry failed to settle the outstanding bills.

Liberia

Development programme for poor communities

The Accelerated Community Development Program (ACDP) which was launched by president George Weah on 24.10.22 was approved by representatives of ministries, other government agencies, special interest groups and development partners of Liberia at a meeting convened by the ministry of finance and development planning on 09.11.22. According to reports in the media, this approval was required in order to push ahead with the implementation phase of the Community Development Program. The programme is intended to support people in communities in which there is no access to basic infrastructure and services. Planned measures are reported to include the provision of water supplies, solar lighting, sanitary facilities and agricultural equipment. With the support of development partners, the government is aiming to mobilise US\$ 100 million for this programme in the pilot phase from 2022 to 2025.

Mali

Attack on IDP camp in the Gao region

An attack by suspected jihadists on a camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) reportedly took place near to the city of Gao (Gao region) on 21.11.22. At least eleven people died in the attack. The attackers also destroyed the camp's food supplies and stole all the cattle. The camp accommodates internally displaced people who have fled the violence in northern Mali. No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack to date.

Morocco

Three-year prison term for former human rights minister Mohammed Ziane

Former human rights minister Mohammed Ziane was sent to prison on 21.11.22, after his three-year prison term was upheld by the court of appeal. He was convicted of eleven offences, including insulting officials, defamation, sex offences and spreading false accusations. He was sentenced in the first instance on 23.02.22 to three years' imprisonment and a fine of MAD 5,000 (approx. EUR 446 as per 28.11.22). The 79 year-old lawyer has come to prominence in recent years as a result of his public criticism of the security apparatus and his positive stance towards the Hirak movement.

Mozambique

Attack on NGO employee and civilians in Cabo Delgado

A local employee of the French NGO Solidarité Internationale, a number of civilians and a police officer were killed by Islamist insurgents in an attack in the Muidumbe district on 20.11.22. According to reports in the media, 4,200 people – including at least 2,000 civilians – have been killed since the conflict broke out in the north of the country, and around one million people have become displaced.

Nigeria

Kidnappings in the north-west and south-east

Two kidnapping cases were reported in the media in the middle of November 2022, citing information from authorities and people living in the region: Unknown attackers on motorcycles reportedly abducted more than 100 people in various villages and towns in the north-western state of Zamfara on 20.11.22. Zamfara is among the federal states with a particularly problematic security situation (cf. BN of 10.01.22, 28.03.22, 20.06.22, 29.08.22 and 10.10.22). Kidnappings are commonly carried out with the aim of extorting ransom money. Kidnappers are also accused of using kidnap victims as human shields against feared air strikes by the military against armed groups. According to reports in the media, unknown individuals abducted two doctors in the southern Nigerian state of Cross River on 18.11.22 and demanded a ransom of NGN 100 million (approx. EUR 217,000 as per 28.11.22) for their

release. The security forces reportedly managed to free both doctors unharmed on 22.11.22. On the previous day, the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) had threatened strike action in response to the kidnapping.

North Macedonia

Attacks on Bulgarian culture club

Two successive attacks took place on the Bulgarian culture club “Boris III” in the North Macedonian city of Ohrid on 22.11. and 23.11.22. No-one was injured in the attacks. Macedonian demonstrators clashed with police when the club was opened back in October 2022 (cf. BN of 31.10.22). According to a recent report in the media, masked individuals threw stones at the club house and smashed windows, while on the second evening four shots were fired into the building. In a protest note issued on 24.11.22 the Bulgarian government called on North Macedonia to classify the attacks as “serious criminal acts” and to take immediate action to investigate the incidents and punish the perpetrators. It is reported that North Macedonia’s president, Stevo Pendarovski, was quick to publicly denounced the incidents as “barbarian acts”, announcing that the matter would be investigated in depth and cleared up by the authorities as a matter of urgency. The relevant report in the media notes that the events in Ohrid are further straining the already tense relations between Skopje and Sofia. These tensions result from a historians’ dispute over Bulgaria’s role in the culture and identity of North Macedonia which has been smouldering since the end of 2020, and relations remain tense despite a compromise which was reached in mid-2022 (cf. BN of 18.07.22).

Pakistan

Ex-prime minister Imran Kahn declares protest march to Islamabad over

On 26.11.22 ex-prime minister Imran Khan declared the protest march to Islamabad over at an anti-government rally in Rawalpindi, in order to avoid unrest in the country. He also backed away from his demand for early parliamentary elections. Khan had previously been warned against holding any public addresses, due to security concerns. He survived an assassination attempt during an earlier protest march on 03.11.22 (cf. BN of 07.11.22).

General Asim Munir appointed as new military chief

Prime minister Shehbaz Sharif appointed general Asim Munir as the new military chief on 24.11.22. He will succeed Qamar Javed Bajwa on 29.11.22. Bajwa took over the office from general Raheel Sharif in 2016. The military has played a prominent role in Pakistan since the country gained independence in 1947, staging three coups in all. The military ruled Pakistan for more than 30 years and continues to influence domestic policy, foreign policy and economic issues. Bajwa will be remembered above all for his role in shaping the country’s foreign policy. He brokered the opening of the border crossing between India and Pakistan for Sikh pilgrims in 2019 and was committed to improving relations with India. In February 2021 the two sides unexpectedly agreed a ceasefire along the border running through Kashmir (Line of Control - LoC). Bajwa provided China with a guarantee that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a US\$ 60 billion infrastructure project, would be protected from rebels in the restive province of Balochistan. Bajwa also championed good relations with Saudi Arabia and the USA. Finally, in 2022 he negotiated a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and secured Pakistan’s removal from the monitoring list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Palestinian territories / Israel

West Bank: Clashes with the Israeli military claim two lives

According to the Palestinian health ministry, a Palestinian was killed by the Israeli military near to the city of Jenin, in the north of the West Bank, on 21.11.22. The military has stated that it came under fire from armed individuals in the course of making an arrest and duly returned fire.

A 16 year-old Palestinian was killed in Nablus on 23.11.22, again in armed clashes during an operation by the Israeli military. Four people were wounded, one of whom died shortly afterwards in hospital.

Jerusalem: Two killed in explosions in greater Jerusalem area

Two explosions occurred in the greater Jerusalem area on 23.11.22: The first of the two remote-controlled explosions took place during the morning rush hour at a busy bus stop on the outskirts of the city, while the second explosive device, which was armed with shrapnel, went off around half an hour later at a bus stop near to the settlement of Ramot in the north of the city. A Canadian-Israeli minor was killed in the explosions and more than 18 people were injured. One injured person died of his injuries in hospital several days later. Hamas in the Gaza Strip praised the acts, without claiming any responsibility on its part.

São Tomé and Príncipe

Coup attempt fails

According to information from the government, an attempted coup has taken place in the African island state of São Tomé and Príncipe. Armed attackers apparently forced their way into the headquarters of the armed forces in the early morning of 25.11.22. The attack was apparently repelled. According to a statement by police chief Patrice Trovoada, the attackers included a prominent politician who ran without success in the 2021 presidential elections (cf. BN of 20.09.21). The small country has been considered to be relatively politically stable in recent years.

Somalia

Attack on hotel in Mogadishu

The Villa Rossa, a hotel in the Bondhere district of Mogadishu which is frequented by politicians, was attacked on 26.11.22. The hotel is located in a security zone, close to the presidential palace and Godka Jili'ow high-security prison. The attack began with an explosion, after which armed individuals stormed the hotel. Security forces then forced their way into the hotel and exchanges of fire ensued. At least ten people were killed and a number of people were injured. Minister of Security Dhmed Mohamed Doodishe is said to be among those injured. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Sri Lanka

Economic crisis

According to information released by the UN in November 2022, 28 % of the population are affected by food insecurity and the poverty rate has doubled. While the fuel shortages which accompanied the mass protests in Sri Lanka at the beginning of 2022 have become less severe, the inflation rate for food stood at over 85 % in October 2022. A shortage of foreign exchange means that many goods, including vital drugs, cannot be imported on an adequate scale. Human Rights Watch (HRW) has appealed to the government to respect human rights, alluding to its tough action against peaceful protests. The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) has been invoked repeatedly to arrest people critical of the government (cf. BN of 21.11.22).

Sudan

West Kordofan: Security situation

Fighting broke out between members of two rival tribes in the region around the town of En Nehoud on 19.11. and 20.11.22, in the course of which six people were killed and a number injured. According to reports in the media, two villages were attacked in two waves and the village targeted in the second attack was completely destroyed on 20.11.22. People from the attacked villages have reportedly complained that the attackers were able to proceed unimpeded, as initially no security forces were on the scene and those who arrived later failed to intervene.

Health system: Break-out of dengue fever in a number of states

On 10.11.22 the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors (CCSD) called for the region around the capital of North Kordofan State, El Obeid, to be declared a disaster area due to a major outbreak of dengue fever. The disease has

since spread in twelve of the country's states. North Kordofan, West Kordofan and North Dafur are particularly severely affected. The health ministry announced an official total of 3,326 cases of dengue fever nationwide, with 23 deaths to date. Dengue fever, which is transmitted by mosquitos, has spread on a large scale due to this year's heavy flooding, the warm weather and a lack of preventive measures.

Syria

Damascus: Iranian colonel assassinated

The pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) has reported that an explosive device planted at the roadside blew up in Sayyidah Zaynab, a suburban town to the south of Damascus which is an important place of pilgrimage for Shiite believers, on 23.11.22.

Davoud Jafari, an expert for combat drones and air defence of the paramilitary Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), and his Syrian bodyguard were reportedly killed in the explosion. The IRGC confirmed the incident on its website, blaming Israel for the attack.

According to an international news agency, the incident occurred near to Damascus international airport, which is situated slightly further to the south-east.

Turkish military offensive

The Turkish military offensive which had begun in the previous week (cf. BN of 21.11.22) continued last week. According to reports in the media, five civilians, including one child, were killed in a rocket attack on the city of Azaz in north-western Syria.

There have also been reports in the media of Turkish drone strikes on 23.11.22 which were focused in particular on petroleum plants under the control of the Kurd-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Plants were hit in the city of Qamishli, in the north of Hasakah governorate, and in the area of Rmelan in the north-east of the governorate. The SDF has reported that eleven of its members, 15 civilians and 25 government soldiers were killed in the air strikes.

Türkiye's president Erdoğan has announced that the military offensive is to be bolstered by a ground operation, adding that this would take place at an "appropriate" time for Türkiye. In response, SDF commander Mazloum Abdi announced on 26.11.22 that all SDF-led counter-IS operations would be stopped in order to prepare the troops for the expected ground offensive.

Suweida: At least four smugglers killed at Jordanian border

It was reported in the media on 27.11.22 that a number of people involved in smuggling had been killed in a large-scale anti-smuggling operation on the Jordanian-Syrian border. Smugglers from Suweida governorate were reportedly stopped at the border by Jordanian military. Dozens of people were apparently involved. Local residents report that exchanges of fire continued throughout two nights. The Jordanian military has stated that a large quantity of the drug Captagon was later seized on the Jordanian side, as well as ammunition and equipment. Shortly afterwards, local residents on the Syrian side of the border region found several bodies in the areas in which the clashes had taken place. A number of people are still missing.

Tajikistan

Life prison terms following protests in Gorno-Badakhshan

Prosecution measures following the protests in the autonomous region of Gorno-Badakhshan (cf. BN of 07.02.22) have led to five life prison sentences, including for the former commander Talib Ayyombekov and the activist Munavvar Shanbiev. Eight other defendants received prison terms of between ten and 30 years. No further details of the criminal proceedings have emerged. Protests for greater autonomy from the central government led to violent clashes between protesters and security forces in November 2021 and May 2022, in which a number of people were injured and killed. Citing reliable sources, the UN has reported that at least 40 people were killed in an official counter-terrorism operation in the Rushon region in May 2022.

Türkiye

Rockets hit Gaziantep

Rockets fired from Syria hit the Turkish town of Karkamis in Gaziantep province in south-eastern Türkiye on 21.11.22. According to reports in the media, between six and ten people were injured in the attack and three people died, including one child. The Turkish government has stated that the rockets were fired from northern Syria by Kurdish militias.

Raids and arrests in the south-east of Türkiye

On 21.11.22 the police arrested 47 people during a protest action in Diyarbakir against the Turkish army's attacks on northern Syria and northern Iraq. The arrested individuals, who included local HDP leader Zeyyat Ceylan and several members of local NGOs, were released after several days in custody.

25 people were arrested in house searches in Mersin province on 25.11.22. They are accused of preparing terrorist actions.

Numerous homes were searched in the city of Diyarbakir on 26.11.22 and 30 people were taken into custody. The arrested individuals were taken to the police's counter-terrorism department. No reasons for the arrests have been disclosed to date.

Security forces carried out simultaneous raids in the town centres of Nusaybin and Kızıltepe in Mardin province on 27.11.22, arresting six people. Among those arrested were three politicians of the DBP and HDP. No reasons for the arrests have been stated to date. Raids also took place in Hakkari province and in the districts of Yüksekova und Şemdinli, in the course of which the security forces arrested 16 people. Those arrested are accused of being members of a terrorist organisation and of supporting and disseminating propaganda for the PKK.

Demonstration broken up

On 25.11.22 the Turkish police broke up a demonstration calling for an end to violence against women and for Türkiye to rejoin the Istanbul Convention. At least 100 people were arrested at the demonstration. The authorities had banned the demonstration in advance on grounds of security and public order.

Ukraine

Rocket attacks cause largest blackout since beginning of conflict; the course of hostilities

Large-scale rocket attacks by the Russian military on Ukraine's energy infrastructure on 23.11.22 caused the most extensive blackout since the beginning of the conflict. Eleven oblasts in the country were affected. According to official information, these were left entirely without electric power. Heating and water supplies were down in many towns and cities. The capital, Kiev, was hit particularly severely by blackouts and water supply failures. Long queues formed at filling stations and cash dispensers and in supermarkets. Measures to restore supplies have still not been fully completed. According to official information from the Ukrainian military intelligence service, a further rocket attack on a similarly large scale is expected between the middle and end of the current week at the earliest. In the Donbas, Russian attacks are taking place in Donetsk oblast in the direction of Bachmut, Avdiivka and Marinka. Meanwhile, the main focus of the Ukrainian counter-offensive is in Luhansk oblast, in the area between the cities of Kreminna and Svatove, where the intensity of fighting has recently decreased on account of the prevailing weather. Trench warfare is taking place in the south of the country, with a focus on the use of artillery. In particular, the city of Kherson is subject to shelling by the Russian forces.

Venezuela

Agreement between government and opposition on humanitarian aid

The first formal talks since October 2021 between Nicolás Maduro's government and the opposition led by Juan Guaidó took place on 26.11.22. Representatives of both sides signed a partial agreement on humanitarian cooperation in Mexico City. Under the agreement, an application has been submitted to the UN to release public funds which have been frozen as part of international sanctions. Around US\$ 3 billion are to be allocated to a social fund in order to finance urgently needed welfare spending in the areas of healthcare, food security, flood protection

and electricity. The negotiators agreed to continue the talks next month in order to sound out a timetable for the elections in 2024 and human rights issues. Following the agreement, the US government granted US corporation Chevron permission to resume the extraction of Venezuelan oil and imports of the same to the USA.

Yemen

Another drone attack on an oil freighter.

On 21.11.22 an oil freighter was once again attacked by Houthi drones in the coastal city of Ash-Shir, which is controlled by the government. The Houthis have confirmed the attack. No-one was injured, but the freighter was unable to load any oil and duly moved away from the Yemeni coast. This is the third such incident since October (cf. BN of 24.10.22 and 15.11.22).

Zimbabwe

Law to punish “unpatriotic citizens” approved

Minister of Information Monica Mutsvangwa told journalists in Harare on 22.11.22 that the cabinet had passed a bill to amend criminal law which was aimed at persons who undermined the country's national interests. According to reports in the press, 80 year-old president Emmerson Mnangagwa is seeking to amend criminal law so as to silence critics and consolidate his position. Human rights organisations see the proposed law as part of a sustained attack on the freedom of speech by the Zimbabwean president, who toppled long-time president Robert Mugabe following a military coup in 2017 and subsequently assumed power.

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