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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

15 April 2024

Afghanistan

Security situation

The Afghanistan Freedom Front and the National Resistance Front claim to have killed a total of four Taliban fighters in attacks on Taliban vehicles in Kabul on 13.04 and 14.04.24.¹

Persecution situation

According to reports dated 08.04.24, the Taliban in Sar-e Pol province have arrested a man who had posted on Facebook a picture of Ahmad Shah Massoud (armed opposition to the Taliban during their first rule between 1996 and 2001). On 09.04.24, it was reported that the Taliban arrested a former army officer in Samangan province. On the same day, the Taliban reportedly beat ten people for having their beards and hair cut in Fayzabad, the capital of Badakhshan province.

Reports of 10.04.24 say that a man from Panjshir province died of torture by the Taliban in Kabul. On 12.04.24 another man from Parwan province was tortured to death by the Taliban; it is unclear on what charges he had been arrested.²

Humanitarian situation and expulsions from Pakistan

In 20 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, at least 33 people lost their lives in heavy rainfall between 12.04. and 14.04.24, most of them when their houses collapsed. The Taliban report that at least 600 houses and 800 hectares of fields were destroyed.

According to figures provided by Pakistan, 8,581 Afghan nationals were expelled from Pakistan between 03.04. and 13.04.24.³

Democratic Republic of the Congo

North Kivu: Fatalities after suspected rebel attack

On 08.04.24, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) reported that on 04.04.24, armed actors described as rebels killed three Tanzanian military personnel and injured three other people near their camp close to the towns of Sake and Goma in North Kivu province, eastern DR Congo. This is the same site where two South African military members had been killed and several others injured in February 2024.

Those killed most recently were part of a Southern African peacekeeping force that had been deployed in December 2023 to support government troops fighting the M23 rebels in the ongoing conflict in eastern DR Congo. The SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC) is made up of troops from South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania.⁴

Haiti

Transitional Presidential Council

On 12.04.24, the decree on the establishment of a so-called Transitional Presidential Council published in the official gazette formalized the creation of a new body that had been announced several weeks ago in negotiations mediated by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The new council, consisting of seven voting members and two observers, is to represent a broad social spectrum from various parties, businesses, and civil society. In addition, the council is to form a new interim government following the resignation of interim Prime Minister Henry and initiate an election process.⁵

Iran

Sistan and Balochistan province: Policemen killed in attack on police convoy

Following attacks launched on 04.04.24 on several posts of the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) in Sistan and Balochistan province (cf. BN of 08.04.24), a new attack was reported on Iranian security forces in this province on 09.04.24, for which the Sunni separatist group Jaish al Adl (Army of Justice) has claimed responsibility. Iranian state media have held this group also responsible for the attacks of 04.04.24.

On 09.04.24, Jaish al Adl attacked a convoy of two police cars on a road between the towns of Sib and Suran. Six police officers were reportedly killed and two others injured in the incident.

The Jaish al Adl group, which is fighting for the independence of the province bordering Pakistan, has been classified as a terrorist organization by both Iran and the US.⁶

Tougher action against headscarf offences

The police forces of Tehran and Bushehr have warned women and girls that as of 13.04.24, controls and measures will be tightened to enforce the compulsory hijab laws.

According to the announcement, the wearing of headscarves would be more strictly enforced on all streets and public places, both as part of public demands and based on legal obligations. Women and girls were ordered to wear the compulsory hijab to obey the law and uphold the moral values and national and religious norms of society. Police threatened to take legal action for violations of the hijab requirement as part of their duties. Subsequently, police presence was increased alongside the morality police on 13.04.24 in Tehran's main squares, and women and girls were checked for compliance with the dress code. During these checks, arrests have been made, and in some instances violence has been used against the women and girls arrested. Media report that one teenage girl was beaten by a police officer during her arrest. In Tehran, a mother and her daughter were temporarily detained and then released.

The measures were preceded by a prayer sermon by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on the feast of breaking the fast of this year's Ramadan. The Supreme Leader announced an instruction to enforce measures against the violation of religious norms, emphasizing that the headscarf requirement was a clear religious decree, and underlining the obligation of everyone to comply with this and other legal decrees. Gholamhossein Mohseni-Esche'i, the country's Chief Justice, said that in view of Khamenei's statements, the existing legal framework should be used to enforce better application of the norms.⁷

Iraq

Air strike in Sulaymaniyah

Media report that on 13.04.24, one civilian was killed in an airstrike on the village of Galala (Sulaymaniyah province). It is not yet clear who is responsible for the airstrike. Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT), an NGO that monitors Turkish military operations in the region, assumes that it was an airstrike launched by Türkiye. However, the incident occurred at the same time as the Iranian airstrike on Israel. In this context, several drones and missiles were sighted over Kurdistan and Iraq, and a missile part was found in Erbil province. Iraq had temporarily closed its airspace during the Iranian attacks but reopened it on 14.04.24.⁸

Lebanon

Situation on the Lebanese-Israeli border

Hezbollah and the Israeli army continue to fire at each other regularly. At least 363 casualties, among them 70 civilians, have now been reported on the Lebanese side; ten military personnel and eight civilians have been killed on the Israeli side.⁹

Political unrest after murder of LF official

Following the killing of a prominent representative of the Lebanese Forces (LF) on 07.04.24 under initially unclear circumstances, tensions have increased between different ethnic groups in Lebanon.

According to the current state of the investigation, the Christian official was killed in an attempted vehicle hijacking by Syrian criminals. Since these circumstances have become known, attacks on Syrians have increased significantly in many parts of Lebanon. Various videos posted on social media show physical attacks, some of which are brutal but not fatal. While politicians from all parties have called to refrain from violence, many representatives of the LF have stated at the same time that it was a political murder.¹⁰

Myanmar

Security situation

In the civil war between the Myanmar military junta and ethnic armies and armed resistance groups (People's Defence Forces, PDF), the situation has recently grown acute, particularly in the states of Kachin, Kayin, Rakhine and Shan. In Kachin, troops of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) captured the town of Lwegel on the Myanmar-Chinese border on 04.04.24 after several days of siege. Since 07.03.24, the KIA has gained control of 60 military junta bases and parts of two important trade routes in the state. Five civilians, among them three children, died in an artillery attack by the military junta on Bhamo on 13.03.24. During a multi-day raid on Hpakant, military junta troops shot dead a civilian and set fire to more than 100 homes and shops on 05.03.24. In the community of Mohnyin, two masked men broke into a Catholic church service and injured the priest with gunshots on 12.04.24. On 18.03.24, unknown assailants attacked and killed a clergyman from the community of Mogaung. Since the outbreak of the war in 2021, military junta troops have repeatedly targeted religious sites to break resistance among the population.

On 06.04.24, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and allied PDFs began attacking military junta bases in Myawaddy (Kayin), prompting around 400 soldiers to surrender and flee to Thailand with 200 family members. The Karen National Union has claimed that the strategically important border town of Myawaddy has been completely under the control of resistance forces since 11.04.24. Due to the escalating fighting in the region, several thousand people are crossing the border into Thailand every day. Thai authorities are preparing to take in up to 100,000 refugees.

On 02.04. and 03.04.24, military junta airstrikes on Minbya, Myebon and Pauktaw (Rakhine) killed six civilians and injured 16 others. On 15.03.24, military junta troops killed 23 civilians and injured at least 30 others in a night-time airstrike on the Rohingya-majority village of Thar Dar. In total, at least 79 Rohingya died in Rakhine between 13.11.23 and 01.04.2024 due to air and artillery attacks by the military; at least 127 others were injured.

In the communities of Hsihseng and Hopong in Shan State, over 100,000 civilians have been displaced since 03.03.24 by fighting between military junta troops and the ethnic Pa-O National Liberation Army. Despite a ceasefire agreement signed by both parties, around 50 civilians were killed between 22.01. and 11.03.24, 13 of them after being arrested by military junta forces, and 60 others were injured. On 08.04.24, an artillery shell fired by military personnel in Hsihseng killed a child and injured two others.

In Yangon, an urban guerrilla group fired long-range shock rockets at the office of the chief of military security affairs in Mingaladon Township on 06.04.24. Five civilians were injured in a bomb explosion in the centre of Yangon on 27.03.24, for which no one has yet claimed responsibility. On 04.04.24, PDFs attacked the military headquarters and the military junta's airbase in the capital Naypyidaw with 29 drones. According to the military, there was no damage to people or buildings.

In Kyaikmaraw (Mon State), military junta troops killed five civilians, among them one child, by artillery fire and burnt down around 400 houses on 27. and 28.03.24.

In Salin (Magway region) and Wundwin (Mandalay region), local resistance groups on 18.03.24 killed two administrative officers who had called on young people in their communities to do military service.

On 04.03.24, a bomb hit a passenger bus on its way to Dawei (Tanintharyi region), killing one civilian and injuring five others.

During fighting in Taze commune (Sagaing region), military junta troops set fire to several villages and killed eleven civilians whose mutilated bodies were found between 01. and 04.03.24.

According to UN OCHA, more than 2.8 million people have been displaced across the country, 2.5 million of whom have fled conflict since the military coup of 01.02.21. In a report published on 11.04.24, UNDP stated that since the coup, Myanmar's middle class has shrunk by half, and three quarters of the population live in poverty or close to the poverty line. According to the WFP, 12.9 million people are affected by food insecurity and 18.6 million are in need of humanitarian aid.¹¹

Niger

Demands for withdrawal of foreign troops

Hundreds of people gathered in the streets of the capital Niamey on 13.04.24 to demand the withdrawal of foreign military personnel. According to a media report, the demonstrators responded to a call by civil society organisations close to the Nigerien military government. The withdrawal of US military personnel from the north of the country is reportedly one of the main demands. Joining the juntas in the neighboring countries of Mali and Burkina Faso, the Nigerien military government has terminated the military agreements with Western allies, including the USA, and instead accepted the arrival of Russian military trainers and equipment on 10.04.24. Already on 02.09.23, thousands of people had demonstrated near a military base of French soldiers in Niamey and other places to demand the withdrawal of around 1,500 members of the French army (cf. BN of 11.09.23). On 28.01.24, the three military governments had announced their immediate withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (cf. BN of 29.01.24).¹²

Nigeria

Northwest: Night curfew

To curb kidnapping-related crime in the region, the government of north-western Zamfara State has imposed a curfew from 7.p.m to 6.a.m along its borders to the States of Sokoto and Katsina starting on 02.04.24. Corresponding media reports refer to information from the state's commissioner for information and culture. The focus is on the Sokoto-Gusau-Funtua motorway, where travellers have been kidnapped on several occasions. Cases of kidnapping to extort ransom money occur with a certain regularity, especially in north-west Nigeria (cf. BN of 25.03.24). The perpetrators are armed gang members labelled as bandits by Nigeria's government and other state agencies. They target villages, educational institutions, and travellers. Most recently, the kidnapping of more than 200 schoolchildren in Kaduna State has caused a particular stir (cf. BN of 18.03.24); meanwhile, the children have regained their freedom.¹³

Innovative meningitis vaccine introduced

Nigeria is the first country in the world to use a so-called 5-in-1 meningitis vaccine. In March 2024, a first vaccination campaign was initiated to benefit around 1 million people in the country with the largest population in Africa. This is according to media reports based on an official WHO statement of 12.04.24. The innovative vaccine Men5CV protects against five meningococcal serotypes simultaneously and thus offers more comprehensive protection than other vaccines. According to Director-General of the WHO Tedros Ghebreyesus, the new vaccine has the potential to prevent future meningitis outbreaks and to save many lives.¹⁴

Pakistan

Attacks in Balochistan

On 13.04.24, unidentified gunmen blocked the motorway from Quetta towards Iran near Nushki/Sultan Charai in Balochistan province and shot at vehicles. According to the authorities, eleven people were killed. Initially, a car that had not stopped at the blockade was shot at, leaving two people dead and five others injured. Then the assailants dragged nine workers from a bus and killed them. The resource-rich province of Balochistan borders Afghanistan and Iran and has repeatedly been the scene of attacks by Islamist groups and armed separatist organisations.¹⁵

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Israel: Major attack by Iran

In the night to 14.04.24, Iran fired more than 300 ballistic missiles, drones, and cruise missiles at Israel, as was reported by Israeli sources. 99 percent of the missiles were apparently intercepted by the Israeli air defense and its partners, among them the USA and Great Britain, but also by or with the support of Arab countries. Media report that also the Houthis and groups in Iraq took part in the attacks on Israel.

Air alerts were triggered in numerous areas in Israel. In southern Israel, a child was seriously wounded. An air force base in Nevatim, in the south of the country, suffered minor material damage. An Israeli intelligence center was also among the targets, the Iranian military stated. These two targets were strategically and operationally important for the attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus on 01.04.24 (cf. BN of 08.04.24).

It was the first direct attack from Iran on Israel after decades of hostility and confrontation by Iranian proxy groups.¹⁶

Gaza Strip: current developments; humanitarian situation

The Hamas-led health ministry stated on 12.04.24 that around 33,634 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war. In addition, more than 76,214 people were reportedly wounded. The ministry does not officially distinguish between combatants and civilians.

According to Israeli figures, more than 12,000 militia members have been killed. These figures cannot be independently verified.

In addition, according to the Israeli military, 259 military personnel have been killed and 1,561 wounded since the start of the ground offensive up to 12.04.24.

Fighting in the Gaza Strip is continuing, including ongoing airstrikes. On 11.04.24, the Israeli military announced the start of a ground offensive in central Gaza. On 10.04.24, an aid convoy of the UN Children's Fund UNICEF reportedly came under fire as it attempted to deliver humanitarian aid to the north of the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli government has deviated from its plan to open the Erez border crossing to Israel in the north of the Gaza Strip and announced instead the construction of a new border crossing. Apparently, this crossing was opened on 12.04.24 for deliveries that had previously been checked at the Kerem Shalom border crossing. Aid deliveries to the Gaza Strip have increased since 07.04.24. Israeli sources say that more than 400 lorry deliveries have been transferred to the Gaza Strip every day. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, however, recorded only a slight increase in aid deliveries and published figures for 08., 09. and 10.04.24 amounting to a total of 141 to 246 lorry deliveries per day, in contradiction to the figures provided by Israel. Despite the increase, the UN said that the aid is not sufficient, partly because not all deliveries are reaching where they are most needed due to the difficulties in distributing aid within the Gaza Strip.¹⁷

West Bank: Attacks by settlers after kidnapping of an Israeli teenager; several dead

On 12.04.24, one Palestinian was killed and 25 other Palestinians were injured in a violent attack by Israeli settlers on the Palestinian village of al-Mughayyir. The attackers used firearms and set fire to houses. The night before, two Palestinians, among them one Hamas member, were reportedly killed in fighting with the military during a military raid.

Mesdia report that the settlers were looking for an Israeli teenager from a nearby settlement who had previously been reported missing. A day later, the 14-year-old was found dead, which triggered new vandalism and attacks on

Palestinian villages. According to Israeli media reports, the Israeli teenager was killed. Details of the circumstances of his death were not initially known. The Israeli military spoke of a murder in a terrorist attack. In the attacks targeting al-Mughayyir, twelve houses and several cars were destroyed or damaged. In the village of Douma, a further 15 houses and ten farms were set on fire. In total, more than ten villages were attacked, according to the Israeli organisation Yesh Din. UN OCHA has stated that since 07.10.23, the Israeli military has erected a total of 114 additional roadblocks in the West Bank, further restricting the inhabitants' freedom of movement.¹⁸

Russian Federation

Conscientious objectors abducted in Armenia

Human rights organisations have reported that on the territory of Armenia, the military police of the Russian Federation have arrested two men who refused to fight against Ukraine. Dmitry Setrakov, who had deserted from the Russian army and fled to Armenia, was arrested there in November 2023. He was taken to the territory of the Russian Federation. In April 2024, the Armenian section of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly reported the arrest of Russian soldier Anatoly Shchetinin in Armenia. He was abducted to a Russian military base in the Armenian city of Gyumri. A report by the internet magazine The Insider says that the Armenian border guards prevented his removal to Russian territory.¹⁹

Senegal

Criticism over low proportion of women in new government

One week after the appointment of the new government under President Bassirou Diomaye Faye on 05.04.24, the Collectif des citoyens pour le respect et la préservation des droits des femmes, which is a collective of over 600 prominent personalities, together with around 40 other organisations, have criticised the under-representation of women in the new government and signed and published a corresponding declaration on 12.04.24. According to media reports, four of the 25 ministers, five secretaries of state and four members of the head of state's cabinet are women. In the previous government under Macky Sall, slightly more women had held a political office. The declaration was signed by the head of Amnesty International (AI) in Senegal and the president of the Association of Senegalese Women Lawyers (AJS), among others. The collective demands a meeting with the newly appointed President Faye and the nomination of more women in the government. The collective also criticises the fact that the ministry of women, family and child protection has been replaced by the ministry of family and solidarity.²⁰

Sudan

Humanitarian situation

As of 15.04.24, the conflict in Sudan has been going on for exactly one year, with no end to the fighting in sight. In addition to the ongoing armed conflict, the population is threatened by displacement, outbreaks of disease and hunger due to the deteriorating supply situation. Referring to WHO figures, media report that 15 million people in the country are in urgent need of medical assistance, with most health facilities no longer functioning. In areas that are difficult to access, the healthcare system is particularly vulnerable due to destroyed or looted facilities and a lack of staff, medicines, and equipment.

The current situation in Sudan is described as the largest displacement crisis and one of the worst hunger crises in the world. Around 18 million people, more than a third of the population, are threatened by acute food insecurity. The education sector is also severely affected. According to UNICEF, more than 90 percent of school-age children no longer have access to formal education facilities and programmes.

On 08.04.24, the special envoys of the USA, Great Britain, France, Norway, and the EU called on all actors in Sudan to engage in peace talks and implement a ceasefire. On 15.04.24, an international conference will take place in Paris, organized by the EU in cooperation with France and Germany. The aim is to call for additional humanitarian aid and an end to the conflict. However, this plan is met with criticism from the Sudanese government, as they were neither invited nor consulted at this conference, although they themselves are the subject of the event.²¹

Syria

Northeast: AANES grants general amnesty

On 06.04.24, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) issued a general amnesty for crimes, offences and criminal offences committed before this date.

Excluded from the amnesty were "terrorist crimes", drug and organ trafficking, immoral acts, rape, and child abuse. Also excluded were people who evaded prosecution, as well as offences against the fundamental interests of AANES and crimes in connection with public funds. Media report that life sentences are to be replaced by prison terms of 15 years, and other sentences are to be halved. Prisoners with incurable diseases are to be released after an examination. Criticism has been directed at the vague definition of "terrorist crimes" and the lack of transparency regarding the beneficiaries of the amnesty.²²

Low school attendance rates

Media report that school attendance rates for Syrian children remain extremely low across the country. A report by the UN Children's Fund UNICEF of 15.03.24 states that around 2.4 million of the 5.5 million school-age children aged between five and 17 are not attending school.

The school dropout rates are attributable to the poor economic situation, the prevailing poverty among the population, and the lack of sufficient humanitarian aid. Many children are working to support their families. In particular in the north-west, ongoing fighting and the destruction caused by the earthquake in February 2023 are also affecting children's ability to attend school. For children and young people in refugee camps in the north-west or from more remote areas, the high cost of living and the associated transport costs create further obstacles.

According to a UN report on the humanitarian situation in Syria of March 2024, the governorates with the highest percentage of children not attending school are Idlib with 69 percent, followed by Raqqqa with 48 percent, Damascus with 46 percent, Rif Dimashq with 40 percent and Aleppo with 38 percent.²³

Togo

Election campaign in a tense climate

On 13.04.24, the election campaign for parliamentary and regional elections, which had been postponed several times, started in the capital Lomé against the backdrop of tensions due to a planned constitutional amendment that would replace Togo's (semi-)presidential system of government with a parliamentary system. Elections are apparently scheduled to be held on 29.04.24.

The draft of a fundamental constitutional reform submitted by the ruling party Union pour la République (UNIR) was already adopted by the National Assembly at first reading on 24.03.24. Faure Gnassingbé, President of the Republic and UNIR Chairman, has not yet signed the law, but has instead called on the national assembly to conduct a further reading. If the constitutional amendment were to come into force, the President of the Republic would no longer be elected directly by the people, but by the national assembly. He or she would then have an essentially representative role. At the same time, the chairperson of the council of ministers would be given the power to manage government affairs. The plan, which came as a surprise to many, has been sharply criticised by the opposition and other actors. Media report of arrests made during campaigns against the planned constitutional reform. Points of criticism include the failure to hold a public debate on the project and the fact that the change to the system of government is ultimately intended to help Gnassingbé remain in power for longer, meaning that it is in fact an attempt at a kind of constitutional coup d'état (French: coup d'état constitutionnel). In addition, criticism has been voiced that the national assembly currently has no right to pass a constitutional amendment after the expiry of its mandate in December 2023 (cf. BN of 19.02.24).²⁴

Türkiye

Columnist arrested

Media report that on 13.04.24, columnist Evren Barış Yavuz was detained in Istanbul and taken to a police station. An arrest warrant was also issued for him. Yavuz had shared a photo on "X" of a Palestine rally organised by

government supporters and criticised the fact that the government supporters had sold paraffin. The background to this is a list set up the trade ministry on 09.04.24 containing 54 types of products, including aviation fuel and jet fuel, whose export to Israel was restricted. The photo also shows the rector of Boğaziçi University, Naci İnci, and the owners of Baykar, manufacturer of unmanned aerial vehicles, Selçuk Bayraktar, son-in-law of AKP Chairman and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and his brother Haluk Bayraktar.

Baykar board member Haluk Bayraktar stated that Yavuz wrote an article on his website entitled "Why Alevis should have a PKK" and that he is a member of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu's team. The İstanbul metropolitan municipality (Büyükşehir Belediyesi İBB) responded that Bayraktar's statements were lies and slander and announced to file a criminal complaint against the Baykar manager. Yavuz himself said that he had never worked at İBB and that the article "Why Alevis should have a PKK" had been written eleven years ago by another person on a website administered by him.

Investigation proceedings have been initiated against Yavuz for "inciting or insulting the public to hatred and hostility", "incitement to commit a criminal offence" and "propaganda for a terrorist organisation".²⁵

Musician's arm broken in custody

Media reports say that Bahar Kurt'un, a member of the political music group "Grup Yorum", had her arm broken in İzmir's closed women's prison in Şakran. Her lawyer has informed that she and her client have filed a criminal complaint with the İzmir chief public prosecutor's office against the guards for torture and ill-treatment.

According to her lawyer, Kurt'un's arm was broken by female guards who came to search the cell on 26.03.24. In addition, Bahar Kurt'un was apparently arrested without any evidence against her. The news portal Bianet has access to Bahar Kurt'un's x-rays and presented the images to medical professionals who said that an operation was necessary, which has not yet happened. Bahar Kurt'un was taken to hospital on 04.04.24, where she was put in a plaster cast after she had decided against an operation as this might have led to a paralysis of her hands and fingers, according to medical staff.²⁶

Attack on trans women in İzmir

Media report that on 10.04.24, several trans women were insulted and attacked by a group of ten to 15 people on Bornova Street in İzmir while they were helping a man who suffered an epileptic seizure. During the attack, one trans woman was injured and robbed of her wallet and phone.

The attackers then began throwing stones at the homes of trans women, as shown by security camera footage. The authorities have confirmed that they are investigating the matter. The trans women announced that they would press charges. İzmir bar association members responded to the attack, stating that the location where the attack took place was about 400 meters from the Alsancak police station and 100 meters from checkpoints. There were also security guards patrolling the street, the lawyers said, so that it was impossible that the law enforcement officers were unaware of the attack. On the contrary, the bar association members added, it often happened that security guards attacked trans people simply because they exist. Apparently, the security guards and police did not intervene because the person attacked was a trans woman. The İzmir bar association also announced that it would take action against hate attacks against trans people.

Bornova Street is considered the home of trans women in İzmir. The threat of eviction from the living and working spaces of trans people in the Alsancak neighbourhood, where Bornova Street is located, has led to an unsafe environment for the trans people living there. LGBTIQ rights in Türkiye have come under pressure in recent years. Bayram Street in Istanbul, where also many trans women live, was recently closed and houses where trans women live were sealed for three months from 04.03.24, resulting in homelessness for trans women. There have been arrests at street events. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has labelled LGBTIQ people as "perverts", "deviants" and "viruses" in the past.

According to the Rainbow Index, Türkiye currently ranks second to last in Europe in terms of LGBTIQ rights.²⁷

Ukraine

Civilian victims

According to media reports of 09.04.24, three people were killed in Russian attacks in Zaporizhia and one in Bilopillia in the Sumy region. On 10.04.24, three people reportedly died in Lypzi (Kharkiv region). Another Russian

attack destroyed a hospital in the border town of Vovchansk. In the night to 11.04.24, the governor responsible for the Odessa region informed that four people were killed by Russian rocket fire. On 11.04.24, a Russian attack claimed two lives in Mykolaiv. On 12.04.24, one person died in the Kharkiv region, police reported. Media reports of 15.04.24 say that Russian attacks also killed one person each in the Donetsk and Sumy regions and two more people in the Kharkiv region.

Russian officials accuse Ukraine of killing 16 people by shelling in the town of Tokmak in the south of the Zaporizhzhya region on 12.04.24. Ukrainian authorities in Zaporizhzhya, however, point to Russian shelling in the region. According to regional authorities, a total of five people were killed by Ukrainian shelling in the Russian-controlled part of the Kherson region on 13./14.04.24.²⁸

Ongoing attacks on energy infrastructure

According to Russian reports from 10.04.24, the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant was attacked by Ukrainian drones for three days. Most recently, the training centre there was hit. Ukraine denies being responsible for the attacks. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) summoned an extraordinary meeting of the Board of Governors, which had been requested by both sides, to discuss the events. IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi called for an end to the attacks on the nuclear power plant, which marked the "beginning of a new and gravely dangerous front in the war". On 13.04.24, the sixth and last reactor block was shut down cold. According to the Russian nuclear power plant management, no radioactivity escaped during the process. The Ukrainian military leadership fears a Russian copycat operation at the nuclear power plant in the foreseeable future.

On 11.04.24, Russian attacks destroyed the Trypilska thermal power plant near Kyiv. Overall, substations and high-voltage lines have reportedly been hit in several Ukrainian regions. Ukrainian media and energy companies say that since March 2024, a major part of the power plants in the country has been destroyed, while other plants are already under Russian control. Energy minister Herman Halushchenko has informed that up to 80 percent of conventional power plants and over half of hydropower plants have been attacked by Russia. According to presidential advisor Mykhailo Podolyak, the concentrated waves of Russian attacks are increasingly pushing Ukraine's air defences to their limits. Russian President Vladimir Putin has stated that the attacks on the Ukrainian energy infrastructure serve two objectives: On the one hand, they are retaliatory actions for corresponding attacks on Russian energy sites. On the other hand, they are intended to exert influence on the military-industrial complex in Ukraine to push forward the "demilitarisation" of the country.²⁹

War events and new mobilisation law

The Ukrainian general and commander of the troops fighting in eastern Ukraine Yuriy Sodol has stated that the Russian armed forces are seven to ten times superior in the eastern regions. Meanwhile, extensive protective measures are being taken for Kharkiv. Forced evacuations of families with children have been ordered for numerous villages near the border. The Ukrainian military leadership is expecting an imminent Russian offensive on the city.

On 11.04.24, the Ukrainian parliament passed a law on military mobilisation, which includes numerous changes to military service, mobilisation, and military registration. In view of a shortage of personnel in the Ukrainian armed forces, the aim is to significantly increase the number of recruits. Issues relating to the demobilisation and rotation of soldiers who have been in service for more than 36 months have been excluded for the time being and are to be regulated by law at a later date. The Ukrainian parliament is also working on a draft law that would allow prison inmates - except for those convicted of capital offences - to be considered for parole if they agree to join the army.³⁰

Venezuela

El Aissami arrested; law for the defence of Essequibo published in the official gazette

On 09.04.24, the former oil minister and former close ally of President Maduro, Tareck El Aissami, as well as the former economy minister Simón Alejandro Zerpa and the businessman Samark José López were arrested in connection with the PDVSA/Crypto corruption case surrounding the state oil company PDVSA. In addition to corruption, the defendants are also accused of money laundering, treason, and embezzlement of billions in public funds, according to the public prosecutor's office.

On 03.04.24, the much-criticised Organic Law for the Defence of Essequibo (Ley Orgánica para la Defensa de la Guayana Esequiba), which had previously been passed by parliament, came into force by publication in the official gazette (cf. BN of 25.03.24).³¹

Group 62 - Asylum and Migration Information Centre

Briefing Notes

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