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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Security situation

After an explosion at a military base in Darah district (Panjshir province) on 16.05.25 which claimed 17 casualties, the Taliban have detained at least 20 residents of the nearby village of Tankhoy whom they accuse of providing support. The National Resistance Front (NRF) claimed responsibility for the attack. The Taliban have not commented on the incident.¹

Governance and persecution

The Taliban-run ministry of virtue has issued a warning that “improper” use of social media will result in legal consequences, stating that user activity was under active surveillance. Several persons were arrested soon after who were active on social media platforms, accusing them of engaging in “illegitimate” online activities. One man was detained because he had spoken with women during TikTok livestreams. In a confession video (which seems to have been forced by the Taliban), he pledges not to interact with women again, and urges women in Afghanistan and abroad not to join his live broadcasts.

The Taliban have dismissed more than 200 professors and university employees in Khost and Paktia provinces as part of a campaign to cut posts in the public service (cf. BN of 12.05.25) in response to cuts in US aid. In Khost, 120 faculty and staff members at Sheikh Zayed University were removed from their posts in a single day. Similar dismissals from university facilities are also planned in Herat, Farah, Badghis, Ghor and Nimroz provinces. At least 16 faculties at the public university are said to be affected in Herat alone. 1,080 members of the Taliban-run security forces are said to have been removed from their positions in Logar province, including 600 from the police command, 400 from the defence ministry, and 80 from intelligence units. Sources allege that the firings have been selective, sparing individuals with close ties to the Taliban leadership, whilst disproportionately affecting those without political backing or who had previously worked for the former government. Some civil servants stated that the layoffs are evidently especially targeting women and former republic-era staff under the guise of administrative reform.

The Taliban’s ministry of education announced that it had established 269 schools and nearly 23,000 Islamic education centres (madrasas) across Afghanistan over the past three years.

Taliban intelligence agents have detained a religious scholar in Helmand province because he had criticised the regime’s ban on girls’ education.

According to a report of 17.05.25, the Taliban have publicly flogged at least 18 people, including three women, across four provinces over the past two days.

The Taliban have banned filming and photography at the traditional Shalimar festival in Kandahar province.²

Humanitarian situation: Consequences of US aid suspension

The United Nations have scaled back their 2025 humanitarian aid appeal for Afghanistan (Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan), reducing it from 2.42 billion USD to 1.62 billion USD, stating that they would only be able to

assist 12.5 million people in urgent need instead of 16.8 million. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) clarified that the 31 % reduction was due to a funding crisis, not a decrease in need for assistance. A significant funding gap, worsened by the recent suspension of US aid, has forced a reduction in both the scope of the plan and the number of people it can support.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) meanwhile warned that 500 of its 900 supported health clinics in Afghanistan are at risk of closure following a significant reduction in funding from the United States.³

Albania

Results of the parliamentary elections; indications of regularities

According to media reports, the ruling Socialist Party (PS) of prime minister Edi Rama won the elections on 11.05.25 with roughly 52 % of the votes cast. The opposition Democratic Party (PD) of former head of government Sali Berisha received roughly 34 %.

As a result of this outcome, the PS is tipped to take up 82 out of 140 seats in parliament, and thus has a comfortable government majority. International election observers under the leadership of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) criticised that the ruling party benefitted from widespread use of administrative resources during the campaign, thus creating an undue advantage for the incumbent. There are also allegations that pressure had been brought to bear on voters, and on public employees in particular. Even though election day had been generally calm and well organised, according to the OSCE there had however been a frequent lack of adherence to procedural rules, and some procedural and transparency shortcomings in the vote count. Unsuccessful candidate Berisha stated that he would refuse to accept the results.⁴

Algeria

Implementation of capital punishment for drug offences announced

Against the background of a major increase in consumption and in volumes of narcotic drugs seized in recent years, the government announced that it would be stepping up the war on drug trafficking by toughening the penalties provided for such offences.

A draft law which has already been debated in April by the National People's Assembly's committee for legal affairs, administration and freedoms provides for the introduction of the death penalty for particularly serious cases, for instance with regard to the involvement of minors in drug rings, selling drugs near sensitive facilities (schools, hospitals), or trafficking in synthetic drugs and strong narcotics.

At a parliamentary debate on the law on 13.05.25, minister of justice Lotfi Boudjemaa stated that given the scale of the problem, the government considered it to be necessary in this context to "activate" the death penalty, on which there has been a moratorium since 1993. He added that "the sword of justice" would "reach out and cut off the heads of these criminal networks".⁵

Burkina Faso

Security situation: dozens of fatalities caused by military and jihadists

According to an HRW report of 12.05.25, members of special units of the Burkina Faso military and the paramilitary vigilante group Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP) killed at least 130 civilians, mainly ethnic Fulanis, in March 2025 near the town of Solenzo in western Banwa province. Burkinabè special units were said to have been active in the region as part of a planned major offensive within the "Green Whirlwind 2" operation. This and previous attacks are said to have led to the displacement of a large number of members of the Fulani ethnic group. The Burkinabè military government often accuses the largely Muslim Fulani of backing Islamist groups. It was said that there were several viral videos of the atrocities on social media.

On 11.05.25, more than 100 civilians and members of the military were killed in attacks carried out by jihadist group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), which is close to Al-Qaida, amongst other places in the northern towns of Djibo and Sollé, as well as in the eastern town of Diapaga. Roughly 50 % of the area of Burkina Faso is said to now be under the control of jihadist groups.⁶

India

Military operations in the Naxalite belt

On 14.05.25, the Indian union home minister posted on social media that security forces had killed 31 fighters as part of several-week-long operations against Maoist rebels in the Karreguttalu Hills, which are situated on the border between the states of Chhattisgarh and Telangana.

The Karreguttalu Hills had been regarded as the unified headquarters of several organisations of the Maoist-inspired Naxalites, where rebels were provided with weapons and strategic training. They refer to their rebellion as defence of the rights of the tribal people living in the region. According to government sources, Indian soldiers had killed at least 400 rebels since 2024. According to a news release by the Indian foreign office, a total of 718 Naxalites had surrendered in the first four months of 2025.⁷

Iran

Execution of inmate who was a minor at the time of the offence

According to media reports, a 20-year-old was executed at Malayer central prison on 13.05.25 for a murder that he had committed when he was 16 years old. The executed person from Hamadan province had been convicted of killing a friend during a fight.

No official announcement regarding the execution had been made by state media or judiciary-affiliated news outlets.

According to a report by an Iranian Norway-based human rights organisation, at least five juvenile offenders were executed in 2024. These individuals had been under the age of 18 at the time of their crimes, but had been sentenced to death and subsequently executed.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the majority of countries worldwide, explicitly guarantees the fundamental rights of children, including the prohibition of severe and inhumane punishments such as the death penalty for individuals aged under 18. Iran acceded to the Convention with a reservation.⁸

Hormozgan: several days of raids involving violent clashes

According to press reports, raids and violent clashes took place in Hormozgan province from 10.05. to 13.05.25 between security forces and residents of the municipality of Bandar-Kalahi.

The raids started on 10.05.25 with the deployment of security forces and special units because local people had been accused of fuel smuggling. There was also disruption of internet access during the raids. Fishing equipment and motorcycles were destroyed in the raids which were allegedly used in smuggling; homes were stormed without court warrants and some destroyed, and the majority Baloch residents who demonstrated against the actions of the security forces were met with violence. According to media reports, some homes had also been looted by security forces. According to information from an Iranian Norway-based human rights organisation, dozens of persons, including women and minors, were wounded and detained.⁹

Lebanon

Situation in southern Lebanon

Israel continues to fly individual airstrikes on targets that it considers to be in breach of the ceasefire agreement.

UNIFIL announced on 12.05.25 that 225 Hezbollah weapons depots had so far been found in southern Lebanon and handed over to the Lebanese Army.

On 14.05.25, an airstrike took place in which a local Hezbollah commander in southern Lebanon was killed, according to Israel. A Lebanese soldier was wounded in another strike on 18.05.25 on a vehicle at an army checkpoint. According to the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon, Hezbollah may no longer be present in southern Lebanon.¹⁰

Third round of municipal elections

The third round of Lebanon's municipal elections, the first such elections since 2016, was held on 18.05.25. They had previously been repeatedly postponed, for funding reasons amongst others. This round saw ballots in Beirut, Bekaa and Baalbek-Hermel districts.

The results are regarded as a test of the atmosphere in terms of the extent to which the war between Hezbollah and Israel has changed Lebanon's political landscape. There were reports of some clashes between the supporters of the various parties, but the election had been held in a regular manner on the whole, according to reports.¹¹

Libya

Influential militia leader killed, heavy fighting in the capital Tripoli

Militia leader Abdelghani al-Kikli, also known under the pseudonym "Gheniwa", was killed on the evening of 12.05.25 during a meeting at the Tekbali military camp in southeastern Tripoli, a facility run by the rival 444 brigade, under the leadership of Mahmoud Hamza. According to media reports, the meeting had been convened to dampen down mounting tensions among the various armed factions in the capital, but escalated when guards from rival groups exchanged fire outside the gathering.

Al-Kikli was one of the most influential militia leaders in western Libya. His power extended well beyond Tripoli into Gharyan in the west and Zliten in the east, and he was widely seen as one of the city's four major militia commanders, alongside the leaders of the Special Deterrence Force (Rada), the 444 brigade, and the 111 brigade. His Stability Support Apparatus (SSA) militia is under the presidential council, which came to power in a UN-recognised process in 2021 with the Government of National Unity (GNU) of Abdul Hamid Dbeibah. The SSA was deeply entrenched in its state institutions, and had installed loyalists in key positions across the banking, telecom and administrative oversight sectors, and even within top diplomatic functions. The SSA had however recently become increasingly involved in disputes with rival armed groups.

Heavy gunfire and explosions were subsequently reported in several Tripoli neighbourhoods, particularly Abu Salim, a densely-populated southern district of the capital, where the SSA is headquartered. The GNU stated on the morning of 13.05.25 that its security forces had taken full control of Abu Salim, and that action would be taken against armed groups. The interior ministry urged residents of the capital to stay at home and avoid movement, warning of further instability, whilst the ministry of education suspended classes across Tripoli, citing the deteriorating security situation. Mitiga International Airport also had to suspend operations until further notice.

A total of six people had been killed in the clashes in the night of 11.-12.05.25, according to the emergency medicine centre, although it remained unclear whether they were members of the security forces or civilians. After it had initially been quiet during the day, fighting broke out once more in the night of 13.-14.05.25 between the Dbeibah-aligned 444 brigade and the Rada, the last large armed group in Tripoli which is currently not part of the GNU camp around Dbeibah. On the afternoon of 14.05.25, the GNU finally announced a ceasefire. The authorities did not initially provide any information regarding the number of injured and fatalities, but the UN Support Mission UNSMIL spoke on 15.05.25 of at least eight civilians killed.

According to analysts, Al-Kikli's death and the capture of SSA territory by the Dbeibah-aligned 444 and 111 brigades have served to shore up Dbeibah's position, as this is said to have enabled him to rid himself of a powerful rival. The consolidation of Dbeibah's power in western Libya is hence said to follow the pattern of the east, where commander Khalifa Haftar took control a decade ago by eliminating his rivals and forcing other armed groups under his rule. The most important armed group remaining in Tripoli which is not regarded as being closely allied with Dbeibah is the Security Deterrence Force, also known as Rada, under the leadership of Abdul Raouf Kara. It continues to control the most important airport Mitiga and other parts of the city centre.¹²

Protesters call for Dbeibah's resignation, police officer killed

On 16.05.25, after the situation in the capital had calmed once more in the wake of the fighting which had taken place in the preceding few days, hundreds of **protesters** gathered on Martyrs' Square and in front of the prime minister's office, calling for the resignation of prime minister Dbeibah and his GNU government and for new elections to be prepared. Economics and trade minister Mohamed al-Hawij, local government minister Badr Eddin al-Tumi, and minister of housing Abu Bakr al-Ghawi, resigned in solidarity with the **protesters**, as

confirmed by videos released by two of those ministers as well as local media reports. The government had previously denied reports of the two ministers' resignations.

The government announced late in the evening via the government-affiliated media platform that a police officer had been killed during the protests as an unidentified group of armed persons had attempted to storm the prime minister's office.¹³

Mali

Military junta further expands power

Mali's military junta announced in early May 2025 that transitional president General Assimi Goïta is to remain in office until 2030. This would entail an extension by another five years. The military has ruled since 2020, when it toppled elected president Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta and his government in a coup. The military junta had announced in June 2022 that elections would be held on 04.02.24. This date was however indefinitely postponed in September 2023.

The military junta furthermore announced on 07.05.25 that all the country's political parties and all political activities would be banned. Political parties' activities had been suspended until further notice in all parts of the country for reasons of public security. This means that all political activities are illegal from now on. This was followed by protests in the capital Bamako.¹⁴

Nigeria

Progress and challenges in the health sector

In April 2025, reports on both positive aspects and challenges in the Nigerian health sector caused a stir. The selection below makes no claim to be exhaustive.

Media outlets have reported that the number of persons living with HIV in Nigeria exceeds 2 million. It was also said to be a cause for concern that the country has the highest number of unvaccinated children globally. On the other hand, some 61.5 million Nigerians, mostly children, had been vaccinated against malaria, yellow fever, HPV and other diseases since October 2023. The health sector was currently being strengthened by the fact that the government was rehabilitating 18 medical schools across the country for 110 billion NGN (roughly 610,000 EUR, as per: 19.05.25). Furthermore, a total of 901 primary healthcare centres (PHCs) had been revitalised in 2024, and it was planned to upgrade 2,700 more by the end of 2025.

Although media reports from and about Nigeria report with a certain regularity on progress and positive developments in the healthcare system, for instance with regard to successful vaccination campaigns, efforts in prevention and therapies available (cf. BN of 18.12.23, 24.06., 22.07. and 09.12.24), the public healthcare system is regarded as underfunded and in some cases characterised by highly-limited infrastructure. There is also a shortfall in performance between urban and rural areas when it comes to medical care (cf. BN of 13.11.23).¹⁵

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Gaza Strip: recent developments

The war events in the Gaza Strip still continue. On 13.05.25, the Israeli military bombed the European hospital complex in Gaza, according to its own information in order to neutralise Hamas leader Mohammed Sinwar, who is said to have been located in a command centre underneath the hospital. The hospital suffered serious damage in the attack. According to media reports, a large proportion of the built-up structures in Rafah, in the south of the Gaza Strip, have been destroyed. At the same time, the Israeli military is building individual new structures, including a road along the Morag corridor and other military bases.

On 17.05.25, the Israeli Army started its announced mobilisation in order to step up the military operation in the Gaza Strip (cf. BN of 12.05.25). It had preceded this by intensifying its airstrikes. More than 140 persons are said to have been killed on 16.05.25 alone, according to information from the Hamas-run health authorities.

On 18.05.25, the Israeli military announced the start of major ground operations in the north and south of the Gaza Strip. Five divisions are to carry out the ground operations, corresponding to several tens of thousands of

soldiers. According to reports, however, fewer troops are stationed in the Gaza Strip than at previous times during the war.

The Israeli government announced at the same time that it would once more be permitting a limited quantity of food aid into the territory. The announcement was made after a blockade of eleven weeks and increasing reports of impending famine. Some Israeli officials had also recently confirmed anonymously to international newspapers that Gaza was on the brink of starvation unless aid was resumed soon. No timetable or the implementation of this announcement has so far been made known. More than 60 % of soup kitchens are said to have now been forced to cease operations. Those remaining were only able to provide 260,000 meals per day, and were hence unable to meet demand. At the same time, ceasefire negotiations between the warring parties continued in Qatar.

On 12.05.25, the last hostage with US nationality was released by Hamas. Roughly 20 Hamas hostages are said to still be alive in the Gaza Strip.¹⁶

West Bank: pregnant Israeli woman killed in attack

On 14.05.25, according to media reports a pregnant Israeli woman was killed in an attack by an armed Palestinian. It was reportedly possible to save the child via an emergency caesarean section. She was en route to hospital from her home in the Israeli settlement of Bruchin when the assailant opened fire on her vehicle, according to information from the Israeli military.

In Israeli military operations on the next day, at least five Palestinians are said to have been killed in an armed clash with the military.¹⁷

West Bank: Al Jazeera ban lifted

The Palestinian Authority (PA) announced on 12.05.25 the lifting of a ban on the broadcaster Al Jazeera. The ban was imposed on 01.01.25 after the PA had accused the broadcaster of inciting unrest and interfering in internal Palestinian affairs. The PA has now announced the lifting of this ban. Members of the Fatah-run PA have previously accused the broadcaster of supporting Hamas. The ban was imposed during the PA's military operations in some localities which also targeted Hamas fighters.

The head of the Al Jazeera office in Ramallah stated that the office would remain closed for the time being, as Israeli military orders had also forced it to shut down. Reporters would however resume their work in the West Bank.¹⁸

Senegal

Press freedom ranking improved in 2025

Senegal ranks 74 out of 180 in the annually-updated RSF World Press Freedom Index, and has thus moved up 20 places in comparison to 2024. The security situation for media professionals has improved since president Bassirou Diomaye Faye took up office on 02.04.25, according to the RSF report. The Senegalese government is said to have undertaken several economic reforms in order to bring about transparency in granting and distributing public aid for the media. The legal and administrative framework is also said to have improved. Practices such as the suspension of advertising contracts, and tax audits, are however said to remain challenging for a large number of media outlets.

According to information provided by Senegal's Coordination des Associations de Presse (CAP) in early May 2025, 200 media outlets are however threatened with closure as a result of activities of the Senegalese government, and more than 20 media representatives have been summoned by the security authorities. They are said to be affected by a publication ban, as they allegedly do not meet the criteria required by the press code. The CAP considers the measures as constituting a violation of freedom of opinion and of the press.¹⁹

Somalia

Security situation

On 17.05.25, at least two people were killed and four others were wounded when a car bomb exploded. The explosive detonated in a parking area near the runway of the airstrip of the coastal town of Barawe (some 200 km south of Mogadishu). No one has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

The commander of the 26th brigade of the 27th division of the Somali National Army (SNA) was shot dead by a soldier of the SNA on 17.05.25 near the town of Moqokori (Hiran). The officer killed was the most senior officer deployed in this area. The region around Moqokori has for several days been the scene of recurring fighting between the SNA, militias allied with it, and al-Shabaab. It remains unclear what the motive for killing the officer was.

At least 20 people were killed in Mogadishu on 18.05.25 by a suicide bomber. There is as yet no official count of fatalities and casualties. The explosion ripped through a queue of young men waiting to enlist for military service. The attack took place in a military compound in a part of the city secured by multiple military checkpoints. It is unclear at present how the bomber managed to evade the checkpoints unnoticed. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack, saying that it had killed over 30 soldiers and injured more than 50.²⁰

Flooding

UNOCHA reported that flash floods caused by weather conditions had repeatedly occurred since mid-April 2025, with at least 17 lives lost so far. More than 84,000 people have reportedly been affected by the floods and their consequences, such as the destruction of homes, farming land or infrastructure. According to the UN report, the rains have been persistent since April 2025, and are caused by climate change.²¹

Syria

USA announce lifting of sanctions

US president Donald Trump announced on 13.05.25, during his visit to Saudi Arabia, that he would be lifting sanctions on Syria. This is said to particularly relate to three packages of sanctions, one of which was imposed back in 1979 against the Syrian government of Hafez al-Assad, when the country was declared a “state sponsor of terrorism”. A further package followed in 2003 which also sought to prevent state-sponsored terrorism. A third package from 2019, the so-called “Caesar Act”, targeted Syrian players considered to be responsible for human rights violations during the civil war.

The US administration named as preconditions for the lifting of the sanctions amongst other things guarantees on the limitation of the Iranian influence in Syria, the destruction of chemical weapons, the barring of foreign fighters from official posts, protection of ethnic and religious minorities, as well as support in the search for US nationals in Syria.

International sanctions have a major impact on the economic situation and on the everyday life of the Syrian population. Imports and investments were made impossible in many sectors, which led to shortages of many goods, a rise in smuggling activities, and restrictions on humanitarian organisations. The complete lifting of US sanctions could allow Syrian banks to return to the international banking system, and hence financial remittances to be made to Syria.

Although the lifting is only an announcement at present (and still needs to be partly approved by the US congress), Syrians in several major Syrian cities celebrated the US president’s decision. More than 90 % of them live below the poverty line and are suffering from the country’s inadequate infrastructure. The exchange rate of the Syrian lira to the US dollar leapt up by 60 %.

After the US administration had maintained a considerable distance to the Syrian transitional government for months, the first meeting between the two governments for 25 years took place on the day after the announcement of the lifting of sanctions in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.²²

IS in Syria

On 17.05.25, the General Intelligence Service carried out a military operation against an IS cell in Aleppo city. One member of the General Security Forces is said to have been killed in the fighting which subsequently broke out.

According to reports, the extremist group is said to be making efforts to recruit new members within Syria, and particularly in the areas under the control of the transitional government, following the rapprochement between the USA and the Syrian transitional government. They accused transitional president al-Shar’a of being obsessed with power, and called on members of the security forces, and foreign fighters in particular, to join its cells in more rural areas.²³

Ongoing extrajudicial killings, abductions

Reports continue to be regularly received of extrajudicial killings, abductions and attacks in several regions of Syria. On 14.05.25, for instance, an Alawite man was kidnapped near Jableh in Latakia governorate. The precise background to the abduction was not initially known.

Many of the deadly attacks are said to be carried out by armed individuals on motorcycles, so that the General Intelligence Service in Latakia has announced a ban on the use of motorcycles at night. Such a ban had already been imposed in Homs City. According to reports, the killings are frequently carried out on staff or alleged collaborators of the Assad government. In other cases, they however also target Syria's Alawite population, which large sections of society regard as having benefited from the former government.²⁴

Türkiye

Peace process between the government and the PKK

After the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on 12.05.2025 had announced its dissolution and the end of the armed conflict (cf. BN of 12.05.25), according to media reports the Turkish government stated on 14.05.25 that it intended to take legal and technical steps to end the decades-long conflict. On 14.05.25, president Erdoğan furthermore pledged to meticulously monitor whether the PKK's promises were kept.

In the meantime, the government continues to take military action against the PKK. According to an announcement by the defence ministry of 15.05.25, the military is to continue its operations in areas where the PKK is active until it is certain that all threats have been eliminated. The Turkish intelligence service Millî İstihbarat Teşkilâtı (National Intelligence Organisation – MİT) furthermore stated according to a newspaper article of 14.05.25 that it would supervise the process of the PKK's laying down of its arms and monitor the steps towards the practical implementation of the resolution in Türkiye, Syria and Iraq. According to MİT, this should be completed by the end of June 2025. To this end, it will register the arms surrendered and the identities of the fighters internationally, in coordination with the Syrian and Iraqi authorities.

On 13.05.25, the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) furthermore urged the government to take confidence-building steps, such as freeing political prisoners or easing prison conditions for detained PKK founder Abdullah Öcalan. According to press reports, the government is working on a proposal that could ease prison sentences in general. A report is to be submitted to parliament by June 2025 which provides for the conditional release of all those in pre-trial detention for offences committed before 31.07.23. There are said to also be plans to release to house arrest those who are sick, or women with children, if they are serving sentences of less than five years. According to media reports, these moves could affect more than 60,000 people. Justice minister Yılmaz Tunç stated at the same time that these measures should not be interpreted as a general amnesty, which was not on the agenda.²⁵

Protests and detentions at university in Istanbul

According to press reports, on 13.05.25, a total of 97 persons were detained at a student-organised demonstration at İstanbul's Boğaziçi University. They were protesting against a campus event featuring Islamic preacher Nureddin Yıldız. Yıldız has previously attracted public condemnation for comments he made in an online video from 2015 in which he said that Islamic law does not impose a minimum age for marriage and that children as young as six could be legally wed.

His appearance on the university campus sparked protests from students who saw Yıldız' views as incompatible with human rights and child protection standards. According to information from the İstanbul governor's office, 13 police officers were reported to have been injured in the clashes with security forces. According to media reports, 82 of the 97 detainees were released after initial processing. 15 individuals, including a media professional from a Turkish news outlet, were referred to court on 14.05.25. Prosecutors had accused the suspects of resisting police efforts to disperse the protest, and requested their formal arrest. Six students were thereupon formally arrested, whilst another nine were released under judicial supervision and banned from leaving the country.

Several MPs belonging to the Republican People's Party (CHP) criticised the intervention of the security forces using teargas, and accused them of acting partially.²⁶

Ukraine

Ceasefire efforts

According to media reports, the first direct negotiations between representatives of Ukraine and the Russian Federation (RF) in more than three years took place in Istanbul on 16.05.25. There had originally been hopes that talks would take place on the previous day, attended by presidents Zelenskyy, Putin and Trump, as well as president Erdoğan in a mediatory role as host. After it had remained unclear for a prolonged period whether the presidents of the RF and the USA would attend, both of them ultimately stayed away, so that at the highest level there was only a meeting between Zelenskyy and Erdoğan, who is said to have good relations with both sides in the war. A European ultimatum to the RF which was to be used to urge president Putin to first of all agree to a 30-day ceasefire from 12.05.25 onwards, and then come to the negotiating table in Türkiye on 15.05.25, had been ignored by the Kremlin, stating: “You can’t talk to Russia like that”. The EU was already preparing a fresh package of sanctions against the RF. President Trump, whose motives for cancelling – Trump had initially considered stopping over in Türkiye as part of his trip to the Gulf States – remained unclear, stated during his journey back to Washington: “Nothing’s going to happen until Putin and I get together.”

Against this background, according to media reports, the negotiations of 16.05.25 were ultimately set to take place at non-senior level. Whilst Ukraine wished to see a 30-day ceasefire as the basis for negotiations on a long-term peace agreement, the Russian side continued to be interested in “eliminating the causes of the conflict”, and hence in achieving its maximum demands, including insisting that Ukraine completely retreat from Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts. As a result of the brief negotiations held on 16.05.25, Vladimir Medinsky stated after the first meeting that it would be possible to continue the talks. The two sides had initially agreed on an exchange of 1,000 prisoners of war each. President Zelenskyy had called for international pressure on the RF to be maintained, as well as for tougher sanctions. According to media reports, US president Trump intends to talk to president Putin on the telephone on 19.05.25. In the run-up to the planned call, the leading European heads of state and government also called on Trump to impose new sanctions on the RF. The Kremlin had previously stated that it was working on a list of conditions for a ceasefire.²⁷

Civilian victims

According to media sources, at least three persons were killed on 13.05.25 in Russian bombing raids in Kharkiv oblast. A Russian missile strike on 14.05.25 near the town of Sumy caused three fatalities according to information from the governor. According to official Ukrainian sources, at least nine people died in a Russian drone attack on a minibus on 17.05.25 near the town of Bilopillia (Sumy oblast). According to media information of 19.05.25, one person died in Kyiv and one in Kherson oblast in the largest wave of Russian drone attacks on Ukraine so far.²⁸

War events and planned military manoeuvres

The Russian airstrikes continued in the past week according to reports, after the Kremlin had de facto rebuffed the Ukrainian proposal of a 30-day ceasefire and whilst the efforts to engage in peace talks in Istanbul continued. According to media sources of 13.05.25, the commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian armed forces, Oleksandr Syrskiy, stated that the heaviest fighting was taking place in Donetsk oblast, in particular in the Pokrovsk area, as well as in the Kursk border region in Russia.

According to media sources of 16.05.25, the RF and Belarus are preparing major military manoeuvres planned for September 2025 under the name of “Zapad-2025” (“West 2025”), which according to a statement by Russian defence minister Andrey Belousov is to serve to “repel aggression against the Union State” [note: this refers to Belarus]. The Russian military presence in Belarus already increased considerably shortly before the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24.02.22, as part of joint military manoeuvres.²⁹

Yemen

Fighting with Israel goes on

After the Houthi militia once more fired on Israeli territory, Israel launched attacks on the ports of Hodeida and Salif on 16.05.25.

Israel had issued warnings prior to the strikes. There is so far no information on victims. If firing from Yemen were to continue, the Israeli side threatened to target the Houthi leadership in a similar manner as had happened with the leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah.³⁰

Drastic reduction in humanitarian aid

On 16.05.25, the UN announced that they would have to considerably scale back their aid programmes for Yemen because of the drop in the financial commitment of its member states, above all the USA.

The UN presume that there are roughly 19.5 million people in need in Yemen, but will only be able to try to support approx. 10.5 million people if the estimated 2.4 billion USD in donations are collected. In the meantime, however, it is only possible to plan with a budget of 1.4 billion USD, which the UN hope will enable them to provide at least 8.8 million people with basic aid.³¹

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