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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

27 November 2023

Afghanistan / Pakistan

Expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan

According to reports in Pakistani media on 23.11.23, the country's authorities have announced that the expulsion of Afghan refugees is to continue as planned (cf. BN of 20.11., 06.11. and 30.10.23). Pakistan's interim government intends to expel around one million Afghan refugees without documentation by January 2024. To date, approx. 400,000 are said to have returned to Afghanistan. It has been reported in the media that police personnel and employees of the National Database and Registration Authority are going from house to house in refugees' settlements in Karachi and searching for refugees without documentation. The UNHCR condemns the returns in view of the approaching winter and the humanitarian situation in the refugee camps behind the border at Torkham, where many refugees allegedly are without accommodation and have too little food and medical care. According to a poll by Gallup Pakistan, the majority of Pakistani nationals interviewed (84 %) support the expulsion of illegally resident Afghan refugees; 64 % hope that this will lead to a better security situation, more work opportunities and lower rents.¹

Governance and persecution

It was reported on 22.11.23 that the Taliban government had held a cabinet meeting in Kandahar. Topics on the agenda included the return of refugees from Pakistan and the Taliban's monetary policy. There was no discussion of the social exclusion of women which has prevailed in the country for two years.

It was reported on 23.11.23 that at least four local employees of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit had been arrested by the Taliban. They are accused of spying, among other charges.

According to reports in the media, the Taliban closed all women's tailoring shops at the market in the city of Herat on 22.11.23 because men were sewing women's clothing there.

On 22.11.23 the Taliban sentenced the son of the former mayor of Faizabad (Badakhshan province), Abdulrahman Neyazi, to five years in prison for membership of the National Resistance Front.

It was reported on 22.11.23 that former public prosecutor Mohammad Taqi had died on the same day in unexplained circumstances. The Afghan association of public prosecutors in exile in Pakistan reported on 21.11.23 that 37 public prosecutors had been killed in Afghanistan since the Taliban assumed power in 2021 and 45 were currently in detention and also subject to torture.²

Burkina Faso

Attack on village claims lives

Suspected members of a jihadist group killed at least 15 people, including three members of the paramilitary group Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP), in two simultaneous attacks on two districts of the city of Diapaga

(Tapoa province) in the east of Burkina Faso on 18.11.23. According to a source from the security services, the Burkinabe army was able to repel the armed actors in the course of a military operation. More than 50 jihadists were killed and a number of their bases were destroyed in the operation.³

Cameroon

West region: Civilians killed in attack

According to reports in the media, an attack took place on a market in the town of Bamenyan on 21.11.23. Bamenyan is situated in the French-speaking district of Bamboutos (West region), close to the border with the English-speaking North-West region. Eye witnesses have reported that the market was attacked by around 30 armed men on motorbikes. At least nine people were killed in the attack and a number of people were injured. No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack to date. Local authorities allege that armed separatist fighters from the English-speaking North-West region were responsible for the attack.⁴

Colombia

Inadequate protection for defenders of human rights

Amnesty International is of the view that Colombian authorities have not made sufficient efforts to protect defenders of human rights in recent years. This is revealed in a report published by the NGO on 09.11.23. AI notes that people who support environmental protection or the rights of the indigenous population or small farmers are regularly exposed to violence, threats and attacks. In September 2023 the civil-society organisation Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz (Indepaz) reported that 127 people involved with civil-society and human rights issues had been killed since the beginning of the year.

On 23.01.23 the office of the Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo) reported that 215 social leaders and defenders of human rights - so-called líderes sociales - were killed in 2022 as a whole. This represents the highest death toll ever recorded since the government began keeping records on this matter in 2016, and marks a 49 % increase compared to the previous year. The largest numbers of attacks reportedly took place in the provinces of Nariño (35), Cauca (26), Putumayo (22) and Antioquia (22) (cf. BN of 30.01.23). It emerges from an examination presented by the representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia on 15.08.23 that while progress has been made in the area of human rights under president Gustavo Petro's government, certain sections of the population are still affected by violence, and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities such as farmers to a disproportionately high extent (cf. BN of 21.08.23).⁵

Ghana

Ethnically motivated clashes claim a number of lives

Violent clashes occurred between members of the Jaabu and Forboru ethnic groups in the town of Wanchiki in Chereponi district (North East region) on 20.11.23. According to the most recent media reports, at least seven people have been killed and a number injured as a result of exchanges of fire and cases of arson on a number of houses. The incident was reportedly sparked by an attack on a traditional Wanchiki chief. A number of people are reported to have fled to the district capital, Chereponi, or over the nearby border into Togo. The situation is said to have since been de-escalated with the support of the security services.

On the night of 20.11.23 disputes between the Adele, Challa and Akyode ethnic groups escalated into violence once again in Nkwanta township. According to reports in the media, it has since been confirmed that eight people were killed and a number injured. Exchanges of fire, arson and looting are also said to have occurred in Nkwanta. Many people reportedly left the town out of fear. The conflict between the ethnic groups is reported to have been smouldering for some time as a result of disputes over land ownership. The most recent outbreaks occurred against the backdrop of a traditional harvest festival (Yam festival). The interior ministry subsequently imposed a curfew

for the night of 21.11.23. Police patrols and an increased military presence are reportedly on deployment in the area to stabilise the situation.⁶

Iran

Execution of two death sentences

It was reported in the media on 24.11.23 that the death sentence on a man convicted of participating in the killing of a member of the security forces had been executed. The execution reportedly took place at the central prison in Hamadan (in the province of the same name). Reports citing information from a human rights organisation state that the man's family was not informed of his execution in advance. The death sentence was confirmed by the supreme court on 14.11.23 (cf. BN of 20.11.23).

Human rights organisations have further reported that a 17 year-old male juvenile charged with murder was executed in Sabzevar (Razavi-Khorasan province) on 24.11.23. The executed juvenile was accused of having killed a man in a dispute with another man when he was aged 16. Human rights organisations assert that the executed death sentence on a person under the age of 18 is a breach of the UN Convention on Childrens' Rights. According to official information from the government, the accused was already 18 at the time of his execution. Under Iranian law, male persons are fully punishable from the age of 15.⁷

Three members of teachers' union arrested

According to reports in the media on 21.11.23, one female and two male teachers from Shiraz (Fars province) were arrested at their respective places of residence to begin their prison terms for engaging in union activities. The teachers were reportedly prosecuted in June 2023 together with five other persons for participating in union rallies and were subsequently sentenced to prison terms. No details have been reported with regard to the length of the sentences and the precise charges.⁸

Prison sentence for mother of a killed protester

It was reported in the media on 20.11.23 that the mother of a man who died in the protests of 2022 had been sentenced to a long prison term. The woman was reportedly convicted of propaganda against the system and insulting the revolutionary leader, after allegedly disseminating posts in social media on the killing of her son by members of the security forces. Of the total sentence of 13 years, five years are reportedly enforceable.

In the aftermath of the nationwide protests in 2022, human rights organisations have reported in many instances about the authorities pressurizing relatives of killed protesters to prevent them, among other things, from commemorating their family members' deaths at memorial ceremonies.⁹

Iraq

US air strikes on pro-Iranian militias in response to missile attack

Eight people were injured in a short-range missile attack on Al Assad air base (Al Anbar province), which is used by US troops, on 20.11.23. A US air force jet fighter subsequently attacked a vehicle carrying Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) fighters who the Pentagon claims were responsible for the missile attack. A number of KH fighters were killed in the air strike.

On the night of 21.11.23 the US air force launched two further air strikes on KH positions in Al Anbar and Babil provinces. KH has reported that eight of its fighters were killed in these attacks.

KH is a Shiite militia loyal to Iran and as such forms part of the Popular Mobilization Forces (Al-Haschd asch-Scha'bi) which are formally under the control of the Iraqi government. In reality, the government in Baghdad has very little influence over the militias. Since 17.10.23, pro-Iranian militias have carried out around 32 attacks on US troops in Iraq in response to the USA's support of Israel in the current Gaza war (cf. BN of 20.11.23 and 13.11.23).¹⁰

Conflict between Türkiye and PKK

The Turkish defence ministry reported on 24.11.23 that the Turkish military had attacked 17 PKK positions in Dohuk (Kurdistan Region), “neutralising” a number of PKK members. Türkiye uses this term for enemy fighters who have been injured or killed, or who have surrendered.¹¹

Lebanon

Effects of the war between Israel and Hamas

The repercussions of the war between Hamas and Israel continue to overshadow the entire domestic political agenda in Lebanon. The deaths of three journalists as a result of Israeli shelling on 21.11.23 sparked general outrage in the political sphere. The death of a high-ranking Hezbollah MP’s son is being lamented to maximum effect in the media. The father has praised his son’s “martyrdom”. He was killed together with four other fighters belonging to the military branch of Hezbollah, which is classified in Germany as a terrorist organisation, in a retaliatory strike carried out by Israel in response to attacks from Lebanon. Following the announcement of the temporary ceasefire in Gaza, Hezbollah stated that it would adhere to the ceasefire on condition that there were no further attacks by Israel. The ceasefire was welcomed with relief across all parties.

On 25.11.23 the Lebanese health ministry published accumulated figures for casualties of hostilities on the Lebanese side since 07.10.23. The total number of casualties is stated at 385 (this includes any form of injury requiring treatment), including 84 victims who are still receiving treatment and 92 deaths. According to the figures, 91 % of casualties are male, 96 % are Lebanese nationals and 66 % are aged between 25 and 44.¹²

The situation in the south of Lebanon and the north of Israel

According to the Israeli defence minister, Gallant, Hezbollah has fired more than 1,000 projectiles (rockets and anti-tank guide missiles) at Israel to date. The following course of development was observed between 20.11. and 26.11.23:

Up until 23.11.23 fighting remained at a level comparable to that in the previous week. Shortly after the news of the death of the Hezbollah MP’s son a marked intensification took place, only to recede again when the ceasefire came into force on 24.11.23. Since then there have only been isolated incidents, usually involving exchanges of fire with light arms.¹³

Liberia

Fatalities at celebration following announcement of election results

An unidentified vehicle sped into a crowd of people outside the headquarters of the Unity Party (UP) in Monrovia on 20.11.23, killing at least three people. The UP supporters had gathered to celebrate the victory of their leading candidate, Joseph Boakai, in the presidential elections. According to reports in the media, around 25 people were injured in the incident. The car’s driver reportedly fled the scene. On 21.11.23 Boakai announced that all further UP victory celebrations would be cancelled. Members of the UP are describing the incident as an act of terrorism, while security forces are referring to it as an accident.¹⁴

Madagascar

Presidential election

The incumbent president Andry Rajoelina won the presidential elections on 16.11.23 and was re-elected with 59 % of the vote. The election went ahead despite enduring political violence and ten out of twelve opposition candidates calling for a boycott due to misgivings about the integrity of the election. Numerous protests took place in the run-up to the election, and a curfew was imposed on the evening of the election. Approximately 40 % of the electorate totalling eleven million took part in the election. The opposition has already announced that it will not recognise the election.¹⁵

Myanmar

Security situation

According to UN reports, since the end of October 2023 the country has been in the throes of the worst escalation of violence between the Myanmar Army and armed opposition groups since the military coup on 01.02.21, with fighting also spreading to urban centres. In northern Shan State, since 27.10.23 an alliance comprising the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, the Arakan Army (AA) and local guerilla groups has gained control of dozens of Myanmar Army outposts and a number of towns along the Chinese border, including the trade centres of Muse and Chinshwehaw. Two infantry battalions of the Myanmar Army have reportedly surrendered as a result of the advance known as Operation 2710. In the neighbouring regions of Sagaing and Magway, the Kachin Independence Army, the AA, the All Burma Students' Democratic Front and local resistance forces have been carrying out coordinated attacks on military bases since 03.11.23. The fighting has spread to 25 communities in Sagaing, Chin State and the Mandalay region. On 11.11.23 the Karenni Nationalities Defence Forces launched a parallel offensive by the name of Operation 1111 in Kayah State which has led to the capture of a number of military basis and fighting in the regional capital of Loikaw. On 13.11.23 renewed fighting also broke out in Rakhine State between the AA and the Myanmar Army. The main focus of this fighting is in the west of the state, and the town of Pauktaw in particular.

The total number of people displaced nationwide stood at over two million on 23.11.23. Almost 335,000 of this total have been displaced by the latest escalation in the conflict and many have already been driven from their homes on repeated occasions in the past. Almost 200 civilians have been reported killed and over 100 injured since the beginning of the offensive in October 2023. Many of the embattled territories have been sealed off by the military or ethnic armies. As a result, escape routes are cut off and access to humanitarian aid is restricted or completely blocked. The airports in Lashio, Loikaw and Kale have been closed.¹⁶

Nepal

Disturbances at protests calling for restoration of the monarchy

According to various sources, security forces cracked down on around 9,000 to ten thousand protesters in the capital, Kathmandu, on 23.11.23, using truncheons, tear gas and water cannons. The protesters were calling for the restoration of the monarchy and Nepal's status as a Hindu country, on the grounds that the democratically elected governments had failed to bring any progress for the country. A number of protesters and police officers were injured when the crowd attempted to break through a police barrier and reach the city centre. A counter-demonstration attended by around 7,000 people went off peacefully. After ten years of civil war, Maoist insurgents and governing parties reached a peace agreement in 2006, on the basis of which Nepal was declared a secular state in 2007 and a federal republic was proclaimed in 2008.¹⁷

Nigeria

Zamfara State: Killings and abductions

Violent actors described as terrorists attacked a community in Maru Local Government Area (LGA) in Zamfara State on 19.11.23, killing one member of the police at Maru police station and abducting 13 people. According to a report in the media, several women and two children are among the kidnap victims. The purpose of the attack was reportedly to extort ransom money and to seize farm products. It has been reported that armed actors carried out a further attack in Zamfara State on 21.11.23, killing three people from the town of Kaura Namoda. Nigeria's government has been referring to violent actors in the region as terrorists since the beginning of 2022 (cf. BN of 10.01.22). Maru LGA has already witnessed fatal attacks and kidnappings in the past (cf. BN of 07.08.23).¹⁸

Dozens die in clashes between Islamist groups

More than 60 people died in fighting between members of the rival Islamist groups Boko Haram und Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad region of Borno State on 17.11. and 18.11.23. According to reports

in the media, ISWAP members attacked a number of Boko Haram boats on an island in Lake Chad. Nine boats belonging to Boko Haram reportedly sank, taking people on board and dozens of kidnapped civilians with them. Both Islamist groups are said to have suffered casualties. An expert on the region sees the incident as a reprisal for the killing of ISWAP members by Boko Haram's so-called Buduma or Bakura faction (cf. BN of 21.08.23). At the beginning of November 2023, Boko Haram members had attacked and looted another island on Lake Chad and kidnapped dozens of people who lived there. A number of women were reportedly among those kidnapped. According to reports in the media on 17.03.23, more than 200 people have died in fighting between Boko Haram and ISWAP on the edge of Lake Chad in Borno State, close to the border with Niger. ISWAP fighters reportedly killed hundreds of Boko Haram members back at the beginning of March 2023 (cf. BN of 27.03.23). Violence between the Islamist Boko Haram and ISWAP groups involving high death tolls is no rare occurrence (cf. BN of 27.03. and 21.08.23). The rivalry between the two groups has existed since the ISWAP broke away from Boko Haram in 2016. Since then, some reporting has referred to Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) and ISWAP as Boko Haram fractions, while in other instances the term Boko Haram is used solely for the JAS group. Boko Haram is also used as a generic name for both ISWAP and JAS. Both groups have been carrying out attacks and other acts of violence against the military and the civilian population for many years, above all in the north-east of Nigeria (cf. BN of 27.03. and 08.05.23).¹⁹

Anambra State: Success in the fight against arms smuggling and extortion rackets

On 18.11.23 the police arrested three suspected arms smugglers in Anambra State in the south-east of the country. According to reports in the media citing information from the police, the arrests followed weeks of intensive surveillance. 23 automatic pump guns and 625 live cartridges were reportedly seized. Arms smuggling is a particularly fraught topic in the region, owing to the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) independence movement. The Nigerian government blames this movement and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), for many lethal attacks in the region. For its part, the IPOB denies any involvement (cf. BN of 30.10.23).

It was reported in the media on 16.11.23 that a number of arrests relating to the two organisations in the same state had caused a stir. The police apparently arrested three men who were specialised in extorting money from civilians by posing as ESN members. In one case they had sent a text message demanding that the recipient pay a substantial sum of money in order to avoid him and his daughter being abducted and killed by the ESN.²⁰

Gender-based violence in Lagos State: Current figures and conviction of a prominent figure

On 24.10.23 the Special Offences and Domestic Violence Court in Lagos State sentenced a prominent doctor to life imprisonment for the rape of an underage female relative. The doctor is also to be entered in the state's register of sex offenders. This emerges from a detailed report in the media published on 24.11.23, which also lists convictions of other offenders from 2022 and 2023 and states current figures on gender-based violence. Lagos State's Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) registered 5,624 cases in the period from August 2022 to July 2023. In addition to registering cases of gender-based violence, the DSVA is also responsible for instituting the corresponding criminal proceedings. In this connection, the public are requested to report such cases via a toll-free hotline.²¹

Palestinian territories / Israel

Temporary ceasefire

A four-day ceasefire between Israel and Hamas came into effect on 24.11.23. Under the terms of the temporary ceasefire, a total of 50 Israeli hostages who were abducted by Hamas are to be released. Israel is to release 150 Palestinian prisoners in return. To date, a total of 58 hostages have been released by Hamas, 40 of whom are Israelis. In addition, 17 Thai hostages and one Philippine hostage have been freed in accordance with a separate agreement between Hamas and the Egyptian government.²²

Russian Federation

Supreme court affirms right to perform alternative service in case of mobilisation

According to reports in the media, the supreme court has found that a man conscripted in the partial mobilisation for the war against Ukraine has the right to perform community service instead of military service. The man had cited his religious faith as preventing him from performing military service. The applicable law on mobilisation does not include any provisions on alternative forms of service, however, although the constitution stipulates that such an option must be available. The reports are based on information from the human rights organisation Conscript School.²³

Senegal

Walfadjri journalist charged and placed under judicial supervision

According to information from lawyers, Walfadjri journalist Pape Sané was charged on 22.11.23 with spreading false information and “actions and manoeuvres which could pose a danger to public safety and security”. He has reportedly been placed under judicial supervision, prohibited from leaving the country and is required to report to the police. Sané’s police custody was previously extended twice by the public prosecutor’s office by invoking “retour de parquet” – a practice which has been a focus of criticism from the the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) for a number of years. Sané’s arrest on 13.11.23 in connection with a Facebook post drew widespread criticism (cf. BN of 20.11.23).²⁴

PASTEAF activist acquitted after eleven months in custody

According to a report in the media, on 22.12.23 the criminal court in Dakar acquitted Mamadou Lamine Diop of the charges of spreading false information and “actions and manoeuvres which could pose a danger to public safety and security”.

Following his arrest in controversial circumstances, Diop was remanded in custody for over eleven months. The activist belonging to the banned party *Partei Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité* (PASTEAF), who is also known as Diop Taïf, has reportedly been released from custody. It had only recently been reported that the public prosecutor’s office in Dakar had managed to force through a continuation of Taïf’s retention in custody – despite a previous court ruling to the contrary (cf. BN of 20.11.23).²⁵

Anti-government rapper charged again and back in custody

The rap activist and Sonko supporter Nitt Doff, who was arrested on 17.11.23, has been remanded in custody once again (cf. BN of 20.11.23). According to information from lawyers, he has been charged with “actions and manoeuvres intended to endanger public safety and security and to cause serious political unrest” and with insulting the president, among other offences. The rapper already faces trial for other criminal offences and was only recently provisionally released and placed under judicial supervision (cf. BN of 23.10.23). In the course of a live broadcast on Facebook on 12.11.23, Doff allegedly accused the security forces of having cooperated with armed men in plain clothes – so-called “nervis” – in the fatal disturbances of June 2023 (cf. BN of 05.06.23). The latter are alleged to have committed crimes against the protesting young people and to have subjected them to torture. With reference to eye witness accounts and video footage, human rights NGOs and other parties have previously reported on “nervis” violently attacking protesters with the consent and support of the security forces (cf. BN 12.06.23) – claims which are denied by the government. In addition, Doff has allegedly referred to the president as a “monster”, among other things, described other “political authorities as thieves, corrupt figures and traitors” and called on young people to mobilise ahead of Sonko’s trial before the supreme court. Sonko has failed in his action aimed at securing his reinstatement on the electoral rolls (cf. BN of 20.11.23).²⁶

Sudan

Fighting continues

A Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) base near to East Darfur's capital, Ed Daein, was reportedly captured by the paramilitary militia Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on 21.11.23. There have since been repeated instances of looting by RSF soldiers. People continued to flee the city and surrounding localities after the city was captured.

It has been reported in the media that RSF units attacked a military base near to the town of Babanusa in West Kordofan on 24.11.23, following clashes between RSF supporters and SAF soldiers in the nearby town of Mujil (West Kordofan) on 23.11.23. A sustained exodus of civilians from Babanusa began prior to these attacks and continued after the fighting was over.²⁷

Humanitarian situation

On 22.11.23 the organisation African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) published a report on the use of gender-based violence (GBV) in the current conflict between SAF and RSF. It emerges that various organisations concerned with GBV recorded 124 rapes in the month of October 2023. The actual number of cases is presumed to be in the four-figure range. Rape and other forms of sexual abuse by armed forces are reported, as well as an increase in sexual exploitation, human trafficking and other cases of abuse resulting from unstable conditions in the economy and society. The report notes that the collapse of the judiciary and the healthcare system has made it substantially more difficult to gain access to support.²⁸

Syria

North-west Syria: Air strikes by Syrian army leave at least ten dead

At least ten people were killed in air strikes carried out by the Syrian army on localities in north-west Syria on 24.11.23.

According to reports from opposition organisations, the victims were civilians who were working in an olive orchard near to the village of Qawqafeen in Idlib governorate at the time of their death. Seven children were allegedly among the dead.²⁹

Israeli air strike on Damascus airport

On 26.11.23 Syrian state media reported an Israeli air strike on the international airport in Damascus which caused damage and led to the airport being shut down once again.

Other attacks on targets in the area around Damascus also caused damage. According to the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the air strikes took place only hours after the airport had been put back into operation following air strikes by the Israeli military which had rendered it inoperative several weeks ago.³⁰

Türkiye

Femicides and other acts of violence against women

A report published by the Bianet news agency on 23.11.23 states that at least 288 women in Türkiye were victims of femicide in the period between 01.01. and 21.11.23. According to the report, firearms were used in 165 of the murders, three women were burned alive and two women were stoned to death. Acts of violence are said to have been committed against 681 women. In addition, 350 confirmed cases of mistreatment and 116 cases of abuse were reported and at least 335 women are reported to have been forced into prostitution in the course of the year. The perpetrators were for the most part husbands, former husbands and male relatives.³¹

Tunisia

Trade union members arrested

According to reports in the media, the regional trade union secretary and three other members of the trade union congress Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT) were arrested in Sfax on 20.11.23. The UGTT alleges that the arrests were intended to weaken the union and to intimidate its members. The UGTT has repeatedly protested against the course pursued by president Kaïs Saïed, most recently in the wake of the arrests on 22.11.23.³²

Ukraine

Course of the war

Citing the think tank Institute for the Study of War (ISW), media sources report that the Russian side is continuing to make minor territorial gains in pursuit of its objective of surrounding the city of Avdiivka (Donetsk oblast). Meanwhile, Ukraine has reportedly managed to recapture a number of positions in its operations to defend the city of Kupiansk (Kharkiv oblast) – a railway hub – against Russia’s suspected intentions to recapture the city which it lost in the Ukrainian counter-offensive of 2022. Ukrainian positions near Krynky on the left bank of the Dnieper in the Kherson region (cf. BN of 06.11.23) are reported to have come under attack.

President Zelensky has said that Ukraine needs more air defence systems in order to protect territories close to the Russian border and the routes used to export grain. 20 countries are reported to have formed a coalition to strengthen Ukraine’s air defences. According to the British Ministry of Defence’s assessment, Ukraine is managing to inflict heavy losses on the Russian forces far behind the front lines by means of precision attacks. For its part, the Russian Federation has not deployed any of its best air-launched cruise missiles for almost two months, which has probably enabled it to build up a stockpile of these weapons. The spokesperson of the US security council has expressed concern that Iran could supply

ballistic missiles for the Russian war of aggression, which would be likely to have dramatic consequences for the Ukrainian population.³³

Two cyber defence directors dismissed

By its own account, the government has dismissed the director of the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection (SSSCIP) and his deputy on grounds of suspected embezzlement at this authority which is responsible for the country’s cyber defence. Cyber attacks on Ukraine have reportedly increased since 24.02.22 (cf. BN of 20.11.23).³⁴

Civilian war victims and humanitarian situation

The UN reported on 21.11.23 that at least 10,000 civilians had been killed and more than 18,500 injured since 24.02.22. The actual death toll could be substantially higher, as the stated figures relate solely to confirmed cases. In the three-month period from August to October 2023, 86 % of civilian casualties occurred in Ukraine-controlled territories. In the same period, almost half of the casualties were the victims of attacks far away from the front.

According to information from the governor of Dnipropetrovsk oblast on 20.11.23, one person died and one was injured when Russian artillery fire damaged a gas pipeline and a power line in the city of Nikopol. Three people were reportedly killed in a Russian attack on a hospital in the city of Selydove (Donetsk oblast) on 21.11.23. It was reported on 24.11.23 that Russian shelling of Ukraine-controlled territories in the Donetsk region had killed two people. Attacks, including the use of cluster bombs, in the Kherson region on the right bank of the Dnieper are reported to have claimed six civilian lives. Prior to this, Russian artillery shelling which hit a car park in the oblast’s capital of the same name, is said to have killed two people on 20.11.23. In a drone attack described by the Ukrainian side as the largest since the beginning of the Russian invasion, five people were injured by falling debris on the night of 24.11.23. 17,000 people in the Kiev region were reportedly without electricity. In all, Ukraine claims to have shot down 74 out of a total of 75 “kamikaze drones”.

According to the relevant authorities, Ukraine is unable to generate sufficient heating energy to cover the increasing demand and has turned to neighbouring EU member states for support. An outbreak of winter weather on 26.11.23

reportedly left around 400 settlements spread over ten regions without electricity. Annexed Crimea is reportedly also affected, with almost half a million people without electricity there.

According to the British Ministry of Defence, at least 11,000 Ukrainian children from the age of four are being held at 43 re-education facilities in the Russian Federation and in Crimea.³⁵

Yemen

Red Sea: Attack on another merchant ship with link to Israel

On 26.11.23 armed actors attempted to bring a merchant ship under their control in the Gulf of Aden. The container ship belongs to a British company whose owners are Israeli nationals. A US navy destroyer located in the vicinity responded to the emergency call from the container ship and was able to apprehend the five attackers. Two missiles were fired at the US destroyer from the direction of the Houthi-controlled territories. They missed their target by several sea miles, however, and thus caused no damage or injuries. No group has claimed responsibility for the incident to date. At the time of the attack the ship was in coastal waters which are under the control of Yemen's internationally recognised government. The Yemeni government is blaming the incident on the Houthis.

On 19.11.23 the Houthis hijacked a merchant ship with links to Israel and threatened to carry out similar attacks (cf. BN of 20.11.23).³⁶

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