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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Disclaimer

This document was originally written in German and has been translated into English with an automatic translation tool. It is possible that translation errors may still be found. You can access the original German version here: https://milo.bamf.de/otcs/cs.exe/app/search/query_id/24179136.

16 February 2026

Afghanistan

Security situation

The UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team reported in a report published on 4 February 2026 that the leader ("Emir") and his deputy of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) are based in Kabul and that the Taliban provide protection and freedom of movement to several other militant groups, including the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, TTP). According to the report to the UN Security Council, the Taliban are granting the TTP greater freedom of movement and operational support in Afghanistan, which has led to an increase in complex attacks in Pakistan. The TTP reportedly uses modern weapons and drone systems, some of which are provided by the Taliban, as well as AI. While the Taliban took action against the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), other groups, including AQIS and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which is opposed to China, continued to receive support and freedom of movement, particularly in Badakhshan province. The report is in line with earlier reports (see BN of 22 December 2025) and contradicts the Taliban's claim that Afghanistan is free of terrorist groups. On 12 February 2026, the General Staff of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, a Russian-led military alliance of post-Soviet states, also reported on numerous international extremist and terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan. Chief of General Staff Andrey Serdyukov warned that this threatened regional stability and could spread terrorism to neighbouring Central Asian countries.¹

Humanitarian and economic situation

Just under a year after the dissolution of USAID for Afghanistan, a US daily newspaper reported on 4 February 2026 that the humanitarian crisis was worsening. The country was characterised by child famine and the closure of almost 450 health centres. After the Taliban took power in 2021, the US provided around USD 1 billion in aid annually (over a third of all aid), but these funds have dried up since the dismantling of USAID programmes. According to the WFP, this has left four million children at risk of starvation. Over 17 million Afghans, about 40% of the population, are suffering from acute food shortages – two million more than last year. Seven provinces are affected by acute food insecurity, the last stage before famine according to the internationally recognised Integrated Phase Classification of Food Security. The triggers include the

return of around 2.8 million refugees from Iran and Pakistan in 2025 and devastating earthquakes; neither other donors nor EU cuts could close the gap. The Trump administration rejects aid; a current draft in the US Senate also blocks indirect cash flows to the Taliban.²

Bangladesh

Parliamentary elections

On 12 February 2026, the first parliamentary elections since the fall of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024 took place. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won 209 of 297 seats. The Islamist Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (BJI) party achieved its best result to date with 68 seats, making it the most important opposition party. The National Citizen Party, which emerged from the protest movement in the summer of 2024, won six seats as an ally of the BJI, while Sheikh Hasina's Awami League (AL) party was excluded from the elections. Voter turnout was 59%, compared to 42% in the January 2024 elections. The new prime minister is expected to be Tarique Rahman, the leader of the BNP and son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

In parallel with the parliamentary elections, eligible voters voted on a series of constitutional reforms that had been promoted by the transitional government under Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus and summarised in the so-called July Charter. Among other things, these reforms are intended to make the judiciary more independent and limit the term of office of the prime minister to two legislative periods. The reforms were approved by a majority of 60%.³

Increase in political violence ahead of parliamentary elections

In the run-up to the parliamentary elections on 12 February 2026, there were increasing reports of politically motivated acts of violence. Since the election date was announced on 11 December 2025, local media and human rights groups have recorded 62 violent clashes and 16 deaths in connection with the election campaign (as of 27 January 2026). The human rights organisation Ain O Salish Kendra counted 75 cases of political violence in January 2026 alone, in which a total of 616 people were injured and 11 killed. Officially, there were no politically motivated murders during the period mentioned. Thirteen of the 16 fatalities mentioned above were prominent members of the BNP. The other three victims are Sharif Osman Hadi, an independent candidate and co-leader of the protest movement in the summer of 2024 (see BN of 12 January 2026), a district chairman of the BJI and a local leader of the banned youth organisation Jubo League of the former ruling party AL. The violence affected all political camps and in some cases also broke out within parties. For example, clashes among BNP supporters on 24 January 2026 left more than 100 people injured in four districts.

On election day itself, the election monitoring organisation Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) recorded 149 incidents of unrest at polling stations and 105 clashes between voters from rival parties nationwide. A total of 145 people were injured. According to HRSS, on 13 and 14 February 2026, three people were killed and over 300 injured in violent riots related to the elections, and 350 shops, offices and homes were attacked, including through arson.

Between the transitional government took office on 9 August 2024 and 31 December 2025, the human rights organisation Odhikar documented 238 deaths and 6,704 injuries as a result of political violence. The NGO Transparency International Bangladesh reported 158 political activists killed and 7,082 injured between August 2024 and December 2025, with most incidents (92%) linked to the BNP, followed by the AL (21%), BJI (8%) and the National Citizen Party (1%). During the same period, the Centre for Sufi Heritage recorded 97 attacks on shrines nationwide, killing three people and injuring 468. On 4 February 2026, HRW published a report stating that politically motivated and arbitrary arrests were also common practice under the transitional government, with the result that hundreds of AL members and supporters, among others, are

being held on suspicion of murder and without trial.⁴

Belarus

Situation at the Belarusian border

According to media reports, the authorities in Poland, Latvia and Lithuania have each reported a sharp decline in illegal border crossings from Belarus in January and February 2026 compared to previous months and the same period last year. According to these reports, fewer than 20 attempts were recorded at the Polish border between 1 January and 23 January 2026. The authorities in Latvia and Lithuania stated that there had been no attempts to cross the border illegally in January 2026. The Latvian Ministry of the Interior cites winter weather conditions as the main reason for the decline and does not rule out the possibility that migrants are waiting for the situation to change in the forests on the Belarusian side during the severe cold spell. The Polish authorities emphasise that the decline is due to the expansion and optimisation of border facilities on their part (see BN of 02.02.26 and 27.10.25).⁵

Burundi

Precarious human rights situation continues

According to reports, several civilians were killed in January 2026. Most cases occurred in Gitega province, followed by Bujumbura, Buhumuza, Butanyerera and Burunga provinces. In addition, organisations reported ongoing acts of violence, including cases of torture and abductions, often involving secret service forces and the youth militia of the ruling Imbonerakure party. Critical voices, including media professionals and opposition figures, were said to be under particular pressure.

The political repression, which was already very high during the 2025 elections, continues. The population is being intimidated through abductions, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial executions, torture and sexual violence in the context of the elections. The economic situation is precarious, with high inflation and fuel shortages, which is worsening the living conditions of the population. The human rights situation in Burundi therefore remains critical, with continued impunity for perpetrators.⁶

Colombia

Humanitarian situation

According to media reports, Colombia experienced unprecedented flooding on 11 February 2026, particularly in the north of the country, killing at least 22 people and 1,200 cattle. In Córdoba, more than 150,000 people in 24 of 30 municipalities were affected by the flooding. 4,300 houses and large areas of agricultural land were flooded after a dam and several rivers burst their banks. In Nariño, there was also a landslide that killed seven people. In addition to Córdoba and Nariño, Antioquia, Chocó and Norte de Santander were among the most affected areas. The Colombian government declared a state of emergency in order to coordinate humanitarian aid as effectively as possible. Rainfall was around 64% above average – and that during the supposed dry season. At the request of President Gustavo Petro, the president responsible for the Urrá hydroelectric power plant resigned and is expected to face a criminal investigation into the reservoir.⁷

El Salvador

Security situation in prisons

According to media reports, approximately 470 deaths have been recorded in prisons since the state of emergency was declared in 2022, including four infants. However, it is assumed that the actual number is

much higher, possibly exceeding 1,300. The reason for this is the high number of people who have disappeared in prisons and the practice of burying bodies in mass graves without informing the families. Ninety-four per cent of those killed were not verified gang members, but included taxi drivers, evangelical pastors and trade union members. The human rights organisation Socorro Jurídico Humanitario therefore assumes that the government has made a pact with the gangs. Most of the deaths occurred in the Izalco and La Esperanza detention centres and not in the prison for gang members, Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo.

According to Socorro Jurídico Humanitario, 31.8% of the deaths analysed were due to the use of force and 32% to a lack of medical care. Many of the detainees were healthy and died within a few months, which would indicate unnatural causes of death. In addition, the state of emergency led to torture, extrajudicial killings, medical neglect and collective punishment.⁸

Iraq

Iraqi prison system: Transfer of inmates to accommodate IS fighters transferred from Syria

According to media reports, the transfer of captured IS fighters from north-eastern Syria, which was completed on 12 February 2026 according to the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), is having a significant impact on the Iraqi prison system. According to official Iraqi sources, around 4,000 inmates were transferred from Karkh Prison in Baghdad to other facilities in Babil and Nasiriyah (Dhi Qar Governorate) last week to make room for the IS fighters in the high-security area.

According to the Iraqi Minister of Justice, the IS prisoners transferred to Iraq are primarily high-ranking fighters. Responsibility for the detainees now lies with the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq, which will also oversee the investigations and court proceedings.

On 14 February 2026, the Ministry of Justice published information on the number and nationalities of the transferred IS members. According to this information, the 5,703 transferees include 467 Iraqi nationals and prisoners from 61 other countries. More than half are Syrian nationals. According to Iraqi sources, prisoners who have committed crimes on Iraqi territory will face trial under national criminal law. As on several occasions in the past, the Iraqi authorities are pressing for the repatriation of detained foreign IS fighters by their countries of origin. Their repatriation is possible on condition that no crimes have been committed on Iraqi territory.⁹

Allegations of corruption and exploitation in Iraqi prisons

According to its own statements, an investigative commission of the Iraqi Prison Authority launched an investigation on 15 February 2026 into allegations of corruption and abuse at Amarah Central Prison (Maysan Governorate). On 14 February 2026, a video was circulated on social media in which inmates accused prison staff of corruption, exploitation, drug trafficking and the use of violence. Further allegations claimed that prison staff confiscated and retained jewellery from relatives during visiting hours and denigrated religious symbols. The inmates addressed their appeal directly to the Minister of Justice and influential figures from politics and religion. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice promised to investigate and prosecute any proven misconduct by prison staff.¹⁰

Iran

Proceedings against protest participants

According to a media report dated 15 February 2026, the Revolutionary Court in Tehran has sentenced a 19-year-old man to death as part of the proceedings against alleged protest participants. The man had been arrested in Tehran on 8 January 2026. The charge is "enmity against God" ("Moharebeh"). The case has been referred to the Supreme Court.

According to press reports and reports by a human rights organisation (MRO) dated 11 February and 12 February 2026, a member of the national wrestling team had also been sentenced to public execution by

hanging in a square in Qom for "premeditated murder". The court ruling, which is available to an Iranian news site based in London, stated that a member of the security forces was allegedly killed on the night of 8 January 2026 in a square in Qom. Citing a forensic report documenting 29 injuries, the court considered the seventh injury to be a contributing factor to death and attributed it to the convicted man. The basis for this certainty is also said to be confessions obtained during interrogation. The convicted man denied the allegations in court and stated that his self-incriminating confessions during the investigation phase had been obtained under duress. According to a media report dated 11 February 2026, his face was not visible on surveillance cameras and his relatives testified that he was at his uncle's house at the time of the crime. However, the court refused to summon witnesses. The verdict was also based on statements from unidentified individuals, and despite the family's efforts to hire an independent lawyer, the court rejected the proposed lawyers and appointed a private lawyer for the case. This verdict is still subject to appeal.¹¹

Protests: Current developments

According to a report by an Iranian MRO based in the USA on 15 February 2026, a total of 53,552 arrests and 11,052 summonses have been issued since the wave of protests began on 28 December 2025. In addition, 7,015 deaths have been confirmed. 6,508 of those killed were demonstrators. Furthermore, 214 members of the security forces and 67 civilians have been reported killed. A further 11,744 cases were still under investigation. On 12 February 2026, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Mai Sato, also stated that, following the protests, violations of the right to a fair trial, continued pressure on detainees and the continued practice of forced confessions could still be observed. She also emphasised that there was still no data available on the number of detainees, their places of detention, those sentenced to death and those already executed. She also pointed out the discrepancy between the official figures of over 3,000 deaths and the estimates of civil society organisations.

Furthermore, according to media reports from 14 February and 16 February 2026, chants against the revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and in support of the Shah, who was overthrown in 1979, were heard in Tehran, Shiraz, Karaj and Arak. People are said to have chanted "Death to Khamenei" and "Long live the Shah" from their balconies. These reports cannot be independently confirmed.¹²

Lebanon

Israeli air strikes, reports of glyphosate use

Israeli air strikes continue to occur on a regular basis. On 14 February 2026, the Israeli Air Force carried out a wave of air strikes in southern Lebanon, targeting a number of Hezbollah weapons depots and rocket launchers. No fatalities were reported.

On 15 February 2026, for the first time since the ceasefire came into effect, there was an Israeli attack on members of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Lebanon, in which, according to Lebanese media reports, a car carrying four members of the organisation was destroyed and the occupants killed on the border with Syria. Since the beginning of February 2026, there have been increasing reports of Israeli Air Force spray planes operating along the "Blue Line", the ceasefire line that forms the de facto border between Lebanon and Israel. Laboratory tests have shown that glyphosate was sprayed. The Israeli armed forces have not yet commented on the incidents. According to experts, defoliation is considered a possible method of hindering attacks, as it removes cover, while at the same time allowing for de facto control over the territory, especially as it makes it difficult for civilians to return to the affected areas.¹³

Madagascar

Destruction caused by cyclones

In the week of 9 February 2026, at least 40 people are reported to have been killed by Cyclone Gezani, hundreds injured and at least 16,000 displaced. The second largest city on the east coast of the country, Toamasina, with a population of around 500,000, is said to be particularly affected. Up to 80% of the city was

devastated. Meanwhile, the government declared a state of emergency. Madagascar is repeatedly hit by severe tropical storms, most recently in January 2026, when 14 people were killed. A total of 250,000 people have been affected by the two storms, with homes and critical infrastructure destroyed. The environmental disasters are exacerbating the already precarious humanitarian situation in the country. Currently, almost 1.1 million people are in urgent need of food aid, out of a population of around 31 million (as of 2023).¹⁴

Mali

Restrictions on press freedom: Jeune Afrique suspended

Once again, restrictions on freedom of the press and freedom of expression have been imposed. According to various media reports, the Malian military government suspended the news magazine Jeune Afrique on 16 January 2026. It accuses the magazine of "glorifying terrorism" and "defamation" and alleges that it has made "unfounded accusations" of human rights violations by security forces. Jeune Afrique is also said to have spread "false accusations" in connection with the fuel crisis caused by the blockade by jihadists. In its reports, Jeune Afrique has investigated the failures of the military government, which has so far been unable to find a solution to the fuel shortage in the capital Bamako. Since September 2025, fuel supplies have been blocked by the jihadist group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) (see BN of 03.11.25).¹⁵

Morocco

Lawyers end strike

According to media reports, the Association of Moroccan Bar Associations announced that it would end the weeks-long nationwide strike by lawyers on 16 February 2026 after the government agreed to suspend a controversial draft law on the re-regulation of the legal profession. The bill is to be re-examined in a joint committee with the association under the supervision of the Prime Minister.

The government's approval of the bill on 8 January 2026 had triggered fierce criticism from bar associations nationwide, as they believed it threatened the immunity and independence of lawyers. On 6 February 2026, thousands of lawyers protested in front of the Moroccan parliament in Rabat and again demanded that the draft bill be withdrawn.¹⁶

Nigeria

Deployment of 200 US military personnel

According to its own statements on 10 February 2026, the US will deploy around 200 military personnel to Nigeria to support the Nigerian military in its fight against Islamist groups. In the week of 2 February 2026, the US military already confirmed the presence of a small team. The additional troops are to support this team. According to information from the Nigerian military on 11 February 2026, the US Army personnel will not take part in combat operations. The Nigerian armed forces would retain full control over all security decisions. However, on 25 December 2025, US armed forces attacked camps operated by suspected Islamist groups near the border with Niger in Sokoto State (see BN of 13 January 2026).¹⁷

Kaduna State: Priest and others kidnapped

On 7 February 2026, armed actors described as bandits attacked the village of Karku in the Kauru Local Government Area (LGA) in the northern state of Kaduna, kidnapping eleven people and killing three. According to media reports, among those kidnapped was a priest from the Holy Trinity Catholic Church. The attack took place a few days after security forces freed more than 150 kidnapping victims on 2 February 2026 who had been abducted during Sunday services from three churches in the village of Kurmin Wali in Kaduna State. In Nigeria, acts of violence against Christian clergy, including and especially kidnappings for ransom, have occurred with some regularity in the past (see BN of 29 August 2022, 2 January 2023, 1 July 2024, 17 March 2025 and 26 January 2026). On 5 March 2025, a Catholic priest who had been kidnapped by unknown persons was found dead in Kaduna (see BN of 17 March 2025).¹⁸

Niger State: Attacks with fatalities in three localities

On 14 February 2026, armed men on motorcycles set fire to several houses, kidnapped dozens of people and killed a total of around 45 people during attacks on the three villages of Tunga-Makeri, Konkoso and Pissa in the Borgu LGA in the north-western state of Niger. According to media reports, many residents fled to neighbouring communities. The Nigerian authorities responsible are said to have introduced restrictions on gatherings in the late evening hours and a curfew for motorcycle taxis after 8 p.m. local time as an emergency measure. The attacks took place near the border with Kwara State, where on 3 February 2026 suspected members of an Islamist group killed more than 170 people in the villages of Woro and Nuku (see BN of 9 February 2026). The Kainji Forest, located on the border between Kwara and Niger states, is a known refuge for violent actors described as bandits and members of Islamist groups.¹⁹

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Gaza: Violations of the ceasefire

According to media reports, violations of the ceasefire continue. On 09.02.26, according to information from a hospital, three Palestinians were killed in bombings west of Gaza City. At least eleven people were killed in air strikes on various targets in the Gaza Strip on 15.02.26. According to the Israeli military, these were in response to violations of the ceasefire by Hamas. Since the beginning of the ceasefire, more than 600 Palestinians have been killed, according to health authorities in the Gaza Strip. However, the figures do not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Several thousand bodies are still believed to be buried under the rubble of destroyed buildings. More than 700 bodies have been recovered since the ceasefire began. According to UN satellite image analysis, a total of 81% of the buildings in the Gaza Strip have been damaged or destroyed. More than 61 million tonnes of rubble and debris need to be cleared for reconstruction.

According to the head of the National Committee for the Administration of the Gaza Strip, the processes for entering and leaving via the Rafah border crossing have improved after confusion, delays and severe restrictions in the first week since reopening. Nevertheless, according to media reports, significantly fewer than the announced 50 medical evacuations per day are still taking place. According to official Palestinian figures, a total of more than 20,000 people are seeking to leave for medical reasons.²⁰

West Bank: Expansion of powers for Israeli authorities; economic challenges

On 8 February, the Israeli security cabinet confirmed measures that, according to media reports, strengthen Israeli control over the West Bank and further restrict the limited powers of the Palestinian Authority. The measures include lifting a ban on land sales to settlers; public access to land registry entries in the West Bank; the transfer of responsibility for construction planning for religious and other sensitive sites in Hebron to Israeli authorities; the implementation of environmental and archaeological regulations by Israeli authorities in areas under the Palestinian Authority; and the revival of a committee that allows the State of Israel to proactively acquire land. According to media reports, this catalogue of measures makes it easier for settler associations to locate landowners and purchase land that was previously reserved for the Palestinian population. This, in turn, would have security implications, as the Israeli military would have to become increasingly active in areas that are actually under the control of the Palestinian Authority's security forces, in accordance with its duty to protect the Israeli population.

Several media outlets are reporting increasing economic challenges for Palestinians who lost their jobs as a result of the suspension of work visas for Israel following the Hamas attack from the Gaza Strip on 7 October 2023. Around 100,000 people are said to be affected by the loss of their work visas. At the same time, job opportunities in the West Bank are scarce and salaries are significantly lower. Many of those affected are forced to sell their possessions or go into debt. The World Bank warned of the economic consequences of the severe economic restrictions imposed on the West Bank and warned of the risk of economic collapse.

According to the Palestinian Authority's statistics office, unemployment has risen from 12% before the war in Gaza to 30% today. According to some estimates, tens of thousands of Palestinians are working illegally in Israel. However, entering the country without a permit poses considerable security risks due to the border fence between Israel and the West Bank.²¹

Pakistan

ISKP claims responsibility for suicide attack on Shiite mosque in Islamabad

On 6 February 2026, a serious suicide attack took place on a Shia mosque in the capital Islamabad. The attack during Friday prayers killed at least 31 people and injured 169 others. The mosque, Khadija al-Kubra, was attacked by a suicide bomber who first fired at security forces and then detonated his explosive device. The attack was the most serious in Islamabad since the bombing of the Marriott Hotel in 2008.

On 7 February 2026, mass funerals for the victims were held under tight security. Thousands of mourners gathered as Pakistani authorities arrested four suspects, including the alleged mastermind and family members of the bomber. The arrests followed raids in Peshawar and Nowshera in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KP). The IS affiliate in the region, ISKP, claimed responsibility for the attack, justifying it on the grounds that Pakistani Shiites were fighting for the pro-Iranian Zainebiyoun Brigade in Syria against IS and therefore considered them a "legitimate target".

At the same time, an anti-Shiite event organised by the banned organisation Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) was taking place only about a kilometre away from the scene of the crime.

In this predominantly Sunni country with a population of around 240 million, Shiites make up around 15% of the population. Shiites are often the target of religiously motivated violence by extremist groups such as the SSP and its banned splinter group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ).²²

Security situation

On 11 February 2026, five police officers were killed in an attack by unknown armed fighters in Dera Ismail Khan in KP province. Security forces reportedly killed four of the attackers. No one has yet claimed responsibility for the attack. D. I. Khan is located near Waziristan on the Afghan border. This area has long been considered a retreat for Islamist militias, especially the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Since the breakdown of the ceasefire between the TTP and the Pakistani government at the end of 2022, militia violence has increased.

Following the bombing of a Shia mosque in Islamabad, President Zardari warned that the de facto Taliban government in Afghanistan had created conditions similar to or worse than those before the attacks of 11 September 2001. Pakistan accuses Afghanistan and India of supporting militias in order to destabilise Pakistan. Afghanistan and India reject these accusations.²³

Somalia

Security situation

According to reports, state security forces and local and international allies continue to take action against militant Islamist groups in Somalia (see BN of 09.02.26). Around 9 February 2026, the Somali intelligence service NISA, with international support, killed a high-ranking al-Shabaab commander in Jubaland, and the Somali military in South West State seized equipment belonging to the group. On 10 February 2026, the Somali military and Jubaland security forces killed 14 al-Shabaab members in Jubaland. According to the group, several Somali security forces were killed in the process. Around 15 February 2026, 15 al-Shabaab members were killed in an air strike in Middle Shabelle while planting explosive devices along an important road link. The American AFRICOM also carried out further air strikes against Islamic State in Puntland on 3 February and 13 February 2026.²⁴

Humanitarian situation

According to reports, the humanitarian crisis in Somalia continues (see BN dated 26 January 2026). The current dry season, which began in September 2025, has been unusually dry with abnormally high temperatures. As a result, soil moisture has reached a historic low and vegetation has been permanently damaged. Estimates of the extent of the affected population range from 4.6 to 4.8 million people. They are particularly lacking in drinking water and food. Recovery is not expected until May 2026, provided that the rainy season, which is expected to begin in April, sets in.²⁵

Syria

Northeast: Implementation of the integration agreement

According to media reports, the implementation of the agreement between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the transitional government is continuing to progress (see BN of 09.02.26).

According to media reports from 10.02.26, around 100 non-Syrian Kurdish PKK fighters are said to have left the country. Although the expulsion of foreign PKK fighters was not explicitly part of the agreement of 30.01.26, the transitional government had been demanding this for several months.

On 13.02.26, the appointment of the governor of Hasaka, who was proposed by the SDF, was announced. Once again, the reorganisation of SDF fighters into a total of four brigades within the Syrian military was announced. While one of the brigades is to be stationed in Kobane (Aleppo Governorate), the remaining three will be deployed in north-eastern Syria. In this context, SDF fighters withdrew from positions south of the city of Qamishli on 13 February 2026 and handed over security control to the internal security and Asayish troops.

Nevertheless, uncertainties remain, such as the continued existence of the Kurdish women's units (YPJ). While the YPJ has so far refused to disarm and sought integration into the newly established security force brigades, the transitional government has so far rejected units consisting solely of women.²⁶

US military withdraws from bases in al-Tanf and al-Shaddadi

On 12 February 2026, the US military announced the withdrawal of all its troops from the military base in al-Tanf, in the south-east of the country on the border with Iraq and Jordan. The base was established in 2014 and used by US troops as a base in the fight against IS.

The withdrawn troops, or at least some of them, are said to have been ordered to a military base in Jordan. According to a media report based on an anonymous source from the US military, approximately 1,000 US military personnel are still in Syria. According to information from the Syrian government, the Syrian military has taken over the base and positioned itself along the border. On 15 February 2026, the Syrian Ministry of Defence also announced the takeover of the al-Shaddadi base (Hasaka Governorate) from the US military.

While the US is reducing its troop strength in Syria, Turkish officials announced that Turkish military troops would remain in Syria for the time being. Some of these troops have been there since 2016 and were deployed to Syrian territory as part of military offensives. The exact numbers are unknown, but a media report from 10 February 2026 estimates between 10,000 and 20,000 soldiers.²⁷

IS prisoners and family members: transfers to Iraq completed; thousands escape al-Hol

According to media reports, on 13 February 2026, the US military completed the transfer of approximately 5,700 inmates accused of IS membership from prisons in Syria to Iraq. Initially, the transfer of up to 7,000 of the total 9,000 prisoners was planned. The individuals are said to include foreign nationals from 61 countries, including people from Europe, Asia, Australia and the US (see BN Iraq dated 16 February 2026).

The approximately 28,000 family members of IS members who were detained in the al-Hol and al-Roj camps in Syria were not affected by the transfers. According to media reports, the chaotic circumstances surrounding the handover of control by the SDF and the takeover by the Syrian transitional government meant that large parts of the population were able to leave the camp within the first few hours.

Since control was taken over, a large proportion of the inhabitants are said to have left the camp, especially in the past week. On 10 February 2026, violent clashes and attacks on UN staff took place within the al-Hol camp, who initially suspended their work in the camp. Other organisations also paused their programmes for the time being. Several thousand inmates, primarily Syrian nationals, are said to have escaped during the clashes. Subsequently, on 14 February 2026, it was agreed that Iraqi residents would be transferred to Iraq, while all remaining inmates would be relocated to a camp in Akhtar in the Aleppo Governorate, originally intended for internally displaced persons. However, according to estimates, only 5,000 of the approximately 23,400 people originally in al-Hol did not leave the camp. Only twenty families are said to remain in the annex, which was primarily inhabited by families of foreign nationals. The exact figures cannot be verified at this stage, and media reports do not allow any clear conclusions to be drawn about how the inmates left the

camp. While a large number were able to escape during the security vacuum that occurred during the handover of control, some media reports suggest that parts of the security forces may have facilitated the departure of residents in recent weeks.²⁸

Deir ez-Zor: At least four dead in landmine explosion

According to reports, at least four civilians, including two children, were killed in a landmine explosion in the area around al-Kharata (Deir ez-Zor Governorate). The landmine was part of war remnants that had not yet been cleared. There have been numerous reports of similar incidents in recent weeks and months. Although clearance operations are continuing, the authorities say that their capacity is limited. At the same time, extremely large areas are affected by remnants of war, which pose a particular threat to the civilian population.²⁹

Türkiye

Akın Gürlek appointed Minister of Justice: Ankara Bar Association announces lawsuit

On 11 February 2026, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan appointed Akın Gürlek, the former Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor, as the new Minister of Justice. As Chief Public Prosecutor, Gürlek had previously been involved in several politically relevant investigations, including against the imprisoned Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu. During Gürlek's swearing-in ceremony, scuffles broke out in parliament between members of the ruling majority and the opposition, who wanted to block the swearing-in. Opposition politicians criticised Gürlek's promotion as a reward for harsh measures against opposition figures. As Minister of Justice, Gürlek is also ex officio chairman of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (Hâkimler ve Savcılar Kurulu, HSK). This body is responsible, among other things, for the appointment, promotion, transfer and disciplining of members of the judiciary and public prosecution service in Türkiye. Complaints against Gürlek in connection with his work as a public prosecutor are currently pending before the HSK. Many lawyers see his appointment as a violation of the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. The lawyers' association Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği (Progressive Lawyers Association, ÇHD) called on the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (Türk Barolar Birliği, TBB) to avoid any official contact with Gürlek, to refrain from congratulating him on his appointment, to refuse to recognise him as a legitimate interlocutor, to exclude him from official events and receptions, and to issue a public statement condemning his appointment. According to the ÇHD, Gürlek has been significantly involved in illegitimate proceedings against the organised legal profession (see BN dated 19 January 2026). The Ankara Bar Association announced that it would file a lawsuit against the appointment with the Council of State (Danıştay) on 16 February 2026.³⁰

Cultural worker Ayşe Barım sentenced to 12 years and six months in prison

On 10 February 2026, cultural manager Ayşe Barım was sentenced to 12 years and six months in prison for aiding and abetting an attempt to overthrow the government and was banned from leaving the country. She is accused of being involved in organising the Gezi protests in the summer of 2013 (see BN of 6 October 2025). Evidence of telephone calls with Osman Kavala, who is considered the organiser and financier of the Gezi protests, was used as evidence. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) had already ruled in 2019 that Kavala's detention was arbitrary and politically motivated and ordered his immediate release. Nevertheless, a Turkish court sentenced him to life imprisonment in 2022, which ultimately led to infringement proceedings by the Council of Europe against Türkiye (see BN dated 22 April 2024).³¹

Ukraine

Efforts to achieve a ceasefire

According to media reports on 11 February 2026, President Zelensky stated that he could envisage a referendum on a peace agreement in parallel with presidential elections. However, both would require a ceasefire with the Russian Federation (RF) and security guarantees. At the Munich Security Conference,

Zelensky specified: "If President Trump urges Putin to agree to a two- to three-month ceasefire, we will hold elections." He also said he had agreed with European allies on packages of new energy and military aid for Ukraine by 24 February 2026. The peace talks will continue in Geneva on 17 and 18 February 2026.³²

Civilian casualties

According to media reports, Russian attacks between 9 February and 15 February 26 claimed several civilian lives in the following Ukrainian regions: 9 February (Odessa: 1, Chernihiv: 1), 10 February (Kharkiv: 4, Donetsk: 3, Sumy: 2), 11 February (Dnipropetrovsk: 4, Kharkiv: 1), 12 February (Donetsk: 5, Kharkiv: 2, Odessa: 1, Kherson: 1, Zaporizhzhia: 1), 13 February (Kherson: 2, Odessa: 1, Zaporizhzhia: 1, Sumy: 1), 14 February (Kherson: 2, Odessa: 1, Zaporizhzhia: 1).³³

War events, recruitment

Following the blocking of Starlink for Russian use (see BN of 2 February and 9 February 26), the RF is forcing the families of Ukrainian prisoners of war to register Starlink terminals for Russian use, according to the Ukrainian Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Cases of threats and demands have been documented in this regard. Previously, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence and Starlink's parent company SpaceX had agreed to introduce mandatory registration for internet terminals within Ukraine. The Human Rights Ombudsman of the Ukrainian Parliament reportedly received over 6,000 complaints in 2025 about possible violations by recruitment officers. The number of complaints was almost twice as high as in the previous year (2024: 3,312, 2023: 514, 2022: 18). The most common complaints concerned restrictions on freedom of movement during detention, superficial medical examinations by military medical commissions, violations in the processing of deferrals from military service, the illegal confiscation of personal belongings and unlawful detention in recruitment centres. Recruitment centres were also frequently accused of forced recruitment without respect for basic civil rights and mistreatment of conscripts. According to media reports on 16 February 2026, several recruitment officers in Odessa were admitted to hospital after being attacked by a "group of civilians" while escorting a "violinist of military registration".

On 11 February 2026, the Ukrainian parliament reportedly voted by a majority to amend the mobilisation law with regard to persons under the age of 25 who volunteered to serve during the war under the "Contract 18-24" programme. According to the amendment, these persons will be eligible for a one-year deferral from mobilisation service after completing their military service.³⁴

Energy infrastructure

According to media reports on 10 February 2026, Russian air strikes damaged production facilities belonging to the energy company Naftogaz in the Poltava and Sumy regions. According to reports, Russian attacks on 10 February 2026 led to power outages in 11,000 households in Zaporizhzhya. Russian attacks on the night of 12 February 2026 reportedly caused power, heating and water outages in the cities of Kyiv, Dnipro and Odessa.

Kyiv has reportedly received a further 234 generators, bringing the total to 500, from the EU's strategic reserve to secure heat and water supplies. After all nuclear power plants reduced electricity production due to damage to high-voltage substations as a result of Russian attacks on 7 February 2026, the three nuclear power plants have resumed more than 90% of their electricity production, according to a statement by the Ukrainian Nuclear Regulatory Authority on 12 February 2026. According to reports from 10 February 2026, Ukraine is moving its substations underground to protect itself from Russian attacks on its energy infrastructure in the long term. As part of this long-term project, a second substation is currently being moved to an underground concrete bunker.³⁵

Return of abducted children

According to media reports from 13 February 2026, as part of the Ukrainian president's "Bring kids back UA" initiative, supported by the US First Lady, another five children between the ages of four and 15 who had been abducted by the Russian Federation have been returned to Ukraine. This brings the total number of children returned to date to 1,985.³⁶

Venezuela

Interim President Rodríguez gives television interview to US news channel

In a television interview with the US news channel NBC News on 12 February 2026, interim president Delcy Rodríguez assured viewers that Venezuela would hold "free and fair elections", without specifying a concrete timeframe. She said that this would require the country to be free of sanctions and "harassment" from the international press. At the same time, she reiterated that Nicolás Maduro was innocent and the legitimate president. Regarding the possible return of opposition politician María Corina Machado, she argued that in this case, Machado would have to answer the question of why she had approved the events of 3 January 2026. When asked about the release of political prisoners, Rodríguez said that this was a unilateral initiative by the government that had already been launched in December 2025 and was not on the bilateral agenda with the US. In this regard, the justice system, which had protected the peace of the state in the face of "extreme violence" on the streets between 2014 and 2017, was undergoing a thorough review. She went on to say that corrections would have to be made and all unlawfully detained persons would be released.³⁷

Human rights situation; student protests; hunger strike

According to information from the human rights organisation Foro Penal, 444 releases of political prisoners have been confirmed to date. This does not include those who are under house arrest after their release from prison. A total of 644 people remain in detention for political reasons. According to media reports, the second and final reading of the draft amnesty law announced on 30 January 2026 (see BN of 2 February 2026) has been postponed until 12 February 2026 due to disagreements over the exact terms. It is further reported that on the same day, on the occasion of "Youth Day" and the announced second reading, protests led by thousands of students took place in several cities, demanding the release of all politically motivated prisoners. In Caracas, family members of political prisoners and representatives of civil society organisations joined the students on the grounds of the Central University. These were the largest anti-government protests since Maduro's arrest. On 14 February 2026, ten family members of political prisoners went on hunger strike and demanded their release in front of a National Police detention centre. It is reported that the relatives of prison staff were forced to eat and threatened with punitive detention if they refused. According to reports, opposition politician Juan Pablo Guanipa, who had been arrested on 23 May 2025 in the wake of the parliamentary and regional elections (see BN of 26 May 2025), released on 8 February 2026, was re-arrested shortly afterwards by armed and plainclothes men and placed under house arrest on 10 February 2026. The Attorney General's Office stated that Guanipa, who had taken part in a rally outside the El Helicoide prison following his release, had failed to comply with court-ordered conditions. Media reports cite Guanipa's re-arrest as evidence that, despite the government's recent concessions, there are still no concrete signs that it is prepared to disband the security forces and paramilitary groups responsible for the repression. For real change to happen, it is important that former prisoners and opposition figures living in exile are allowed to protest, organise politically and criticise the government without fear of reprisals.³⁸

Yemen

Several dead in clashes

On 11 February 2026, clashes broke out in the city of Ataq (Shabwa Governorate) between supporters of the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) and Yemeni security forces. According to the parties to the conflict, at least five people were killed and several dozen injured. According to media reports, STC supporters stormed a local government building and attempted to remove the Yemeni flag from the building, which led to the escalation of violence.

Even after the STC's political defeat in January 2026 (see BN of 12 January and 19 January 2026), its supporters continue to demand an independent state of South Yemen.³⁹

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