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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Governance and persecution

According to media reports, on 21.09.24 the Taliban removed a roundabout in Kabul in the western district of Dasht-e Barchi, which is mainly inhabited by Hazaras. The mural with the relief of Hazara leader Ali Mazari located on the roundabout was destroyed in the process. According to the Taliban, the roundabout was removed in order to speed up traffic. Months earlier, the Taliban had already disfigured Mazari's face on the relief. In the province of Herat, the Taliban sawed off the heads of animal statues. Both measures can be interpreted as part of the Taliban's strict interpretation of Islamic law, which prohibits the depiction of living creatures.

In Badakhshan province, the Taliban have expelled 26 students from Badakhshan University for allegedly playing football during prayers, this was reported by the media. In a state television programme, Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada described the faces of women and girls as "a source of temptation" and emphasised that they should be covered in public. In Takhar province, the Taliban shot dead six men for alleged theft and put their bodies on public display in Baharak district.

Ajmal Kohi, a Tajik Taliban commander, was arrested by Taliban intelligence in Faryab province in northern Afghanistan.¹

Bangladesh

Dozens of attacks on Sufi and Hindu shrines

On 14.09.24, the head of the interim government, Muhammad Yunus, condemned recent attacks on Sufi shrines and Hindu temples in several parts of the country and announced prosecutions and measures to protect religious sites from extremist violence. Following the vandalization of two Sufi shrines in the Dhamrai upazila (Dhaka district) on 11.09. and 12.09.24 by mobs of hundreds of people, including members of Islamist organisations, Hindus and Sufis protested across the country demanding more decisive action by law enforcement agencies. On 30.09.24, another attack on a shrine in Sabhar was reported. Since the fall of the Awami League (AL) government on 05.08.24 violent attacks both on Bangladeshi Hindus, who are seen as supporters of the AL, and on Sufi followers have sharply increased.²

Belarus

Pardons and convictions in connection with 2020 mass protests

According to a release of the press service of Belarusian President Lukashenko on 04.09.24, he pardoned 30 people who had been sentenced to prison for their participation in the mass protests against the official result of the presidential election in 2020. In an earlier announcement by the press service on 16.09.24, pardons for 37 other

people sentenced to prison for extremism had been announced. This is the fourth mass amnesty decree issued by the president this year. The statements said that those pardoned had "shown remorse and promised to lead a law-abiding life". A total of 115 of over 1,300 political prisoners have been pardoned since July 2024.

At the same time, the Belarusian human rights group Vyazna announced on 03.09.24 that at least 33 people will be tried for their participation in the mass protests in 2020. In addition, the regional court in Brest announced on 17.09.24 that another five people had been given prison terms of between one and two years for taking part in the mass protests. They were found guilty of "organising actions that blatantly disrupt social order".³

Historian on trial

The trial of the Belarusian historian Ihar Melnikau, who is accused of supporting - unspecified - extremist activities, began in Minsk City Court on 10.09.24. According to former Belarusian presidential candidate Alyksandr Milinkevich, the case relates to Melnikau's work on historical relations between Belarus and Poland, which contradicts a pro-Russian view of history and thus the view promoted by President Lukashenko. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.⁴

Tougher action against LGBTIQ people

According to information provided by the transgender support organisation TG House Belarus on 26.09.24, eight transgender people have been arrested since August 2024 and around a dozen more are detained in Belarus. According to the report, the crackdown on the LGBTIQ community began at the end of August and intensified in early September 2024. Most were accused of "hooliganism" and two of distributing pornography. The detainees are often subjected to beatings, psychological pressure and verbal abuse. According to TG House Belarus, the increasing persecution is likely to be linked to the preparation of a LGBT propaganda law, which is currently still under review. At the beginning of April 2024, the Ministry of Culture passed a resolution categorising all forms of LGBTIQ expressions as pornography.⁵

China

Hong Kong: Former editors-in-chief sentenced to prison terms

The editors-in-chief of the now defunct pro-democracy online magazine Stand News, Chung Pui-kuen and Patrick Lam (cf. BN of 03.01.22), who were arrested on 29.12.21, were sentenced to prison terms of 21 and 14 months on eleven counts of conspiracy to publish and reproduce seditious publications on 26.09.24. Due to a serious illness and the fact that he had only worked as editor-in-chief for two months, Lam's sentence was reduced and he will not have to serve prison time in addition to the ten months on remand. Stand News had played an important role in reporting on the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019 and, according to surveys, enjoyed a high level of credibility among the population.⁶

Colombia / Panama

Controlled migration route through the Darién Gap

According to Colombian President Gustavo Petro, the governments of Colombia and Panama intend to establish a uniform and organised migration route through the Darién Gap, a contiguous jungle area connecting both countries. Following a meeting with Panama's President José Raúl Mulino on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly on 24.09.24, Petro said that both countries want to open a legal route that is quiet and efficient and controlled by the authorities of both countries. Last year, around 520,000 people crossed the Darién Gap via various routes controlled by organised crime to reach the southern US border via Central America. According to the Panamanian authorities, 259,712 migrants arrived in Panama via the Darién Gap between January and 25.09.24. This is a decrease of 35% compared to the same period last year. The Panamanian authorities attribute the decline to stricter security measures, including the closure of some routes through the jungle and more US-supported deportations (cf. BN of 02.09.24).⁷

Democratic Republic of the Congo

400 cases of human rights violations in July 2024

In a statement published on 02.09.24, the Joint United Nations Office for Human Rights (BCNUDH) in the DRC announced that it had identified 400 human rights violations and offences across the entire country for the month of July 2024. Compared to the month of June 2024 when over 300 cases had been recorded, the number increased by around 20 %. The human rights violations and abuses documented in July affected 1,487 people, including around 770 men, 140 women, 55 boys, 40 girls and some people whose age and gender remained unknown. In its statement, the BCNUDH blamed armed groups, the Congolese armed forces (FARDC), but also the national police for the number of victims. The fighting in the east of the country, in particular the attacks by armed groups on the civilian population in the areas of Beni, Masisi, Lubero, Mambasa and Djugu, are responsible for the majority of serious human rights violations and abuses, BCNUDH said. 340 of the 400 documented cases originate from the conflict areas. Another reason for the increase is the rising number of cases documented during public protests in Kinshasa and Haut-Katanga as well as cases of rape with subsequent execution of the victims.⁸

Ghana

Arrests during protests against illegal mining

The Ghanaian police arrested more than 40 people at a protest in the capital Accra on 21.09.24. The civil society group Democracy Hub had planned a three-day protest to denounce the government's mismanagement. A central issue of the protest was the government's handling of illegal mining in the country.

Widespread illegal mining, also known as "galamsey", poses an increasing threat to the country. The unregulated mining of raw materials, especially gold, is causing considerable environmental pollution and is already polluting around 60 % of the most important water sources. The country's water company has been forced to close some overstretched water treatment plants and ration water in parts of southern Ghana. Experts fear that Ghana will have to import water after the year 2030 if the problem is not tackled more effectively. Although President Nana Akufo-Addo has ordered the deployment of police and military forces to tackle illegal mines, a similar approach in 2017 did not solve the problem. This, among other things, had prompted the protesters to become more active.

According to media reports, the Ghanaian police are accusing some of the protesters of attacking officers during the protest. Democracy Hub in turn accuses the police of staging an attack on peaceful demonstrators. Among those arrested is activist Oliver Barker-Vormawor. He had also helped to organise the protests. Together with eleven other detainees, he was summoned to court on 26.09.24. He pleaded not guilty to the charges of unlawful assembly and assaulting an officer. However, he and the other defendants were denied bail. The detainees will therefore remain in prison for a fortnight before appearing in court again.

Barker-Vormawor is currently being treated in a police hospital. According to his legal counsel, he had already stated on 24.09.24 while in custody that he is seriously ill. However, the police had not provided him with medical care in time. The police have denied these allegations.

On social media, numerous Ghanaians are calling for the release of Barker-Vormawor and the other detainees under #FreeTheYouth and #FreeTheCitizens.

Following increasing demands for the government to intervene quickly in the fight against illegal mining, the Ghanaian government has ordered a nationwide lockdown for 30.09.24.⁹

Iran

Family members and other acquaintances of Kurdish prisoner sentenced to prison terms

According to press reports, on 22.09.24 the Tehran Court of Appeal confirmed the one-year prison sentence for three family members and a two-year prison sentence for an acquaintance of Pakhshan Azizi and declared the sentences legally binding. Azizi is a Kurdish political prisoner who is facing the death penalty.

Azizi, who comes from Mahabad, is currently on death row in Evin Prison in Tehran. Her father, sister, brother-in-law and another man were convicted on charges related to Azizi's case. In July 2024, the 26th Branch of Tehran's Revolutionary Court sentenced the father, sister and brother-in-law to one year in prison each. The other person

had received a two-year prison sentence. According to media reports, the family members were accused of aiding and abetting Azizi to avoid a trial and conviction. They were also charged with the offence of assembling and colluding to commit a crime against internal security. The fourth person was convicted of conspiring to commit a crime against internal security.

Azizi was sentenced to death on 24.07.24 for alleged membership of groups engaging in an armed uprising and rebellion against the government. According to the Iranian authorities, she was also a member of the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), for which she was sentenced to four years in prison. To this day, she denies membership of this party, which campaigns for a certain degree of autonomy for the Kurds in Iran. She was arrested by security forces in Tehran on 04.08.13 and subsequently transferred to Wing 209 of Evin Prison, which is said to be linked to the secret service, on 11.12.13 she was then transferred to the women's wing of Evin Prison. Since 14.08.24, Azizi has been standing trial once more for a prison riot allegedly related to the presidential elections. On 25.09.24, she had been treated in hospital for chronic headaches and back pain, which according to press reports were allegedly caused by torture in prison. On the same day she was transferred back to Evin Prison. Azizi had already been politically active in the past. She was first arrested on 16.11.09 when the Iranian authorities accused her of taking part in student protests against the execution of Kurdish political prisoners. She was released on bail after four months and subsequently lived in the Kurdish regions of Syria and Iraq for several years, where she supported refugees and campaigned for gender equality.¹⁰

Iraq

Security situation

On 28.09.24, supporters of the Shiite Popular Mobilisation Front (PMF), which is allied with Iran, attempted to infiltrate the Green Zone in Baghdad during a protest. In addition to government buildings, the zone also is the location of the US embassy where the protesters were heading. The protest was triggered by the killing of Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of the Iran-aligned Shiite Hezbollah, by an Israeli air strike in the south of the Lebanese capital Beirut on 27.09.24.¹¹

Lebanon

Escalation of the armed conflict between Israel and Hezbollah

The armed conflict between Hezbollah and Israel is currently escalating.

On 21.09.24, the Israeli air force started an extensive campaign against Hezbollah, focussing on southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley and the southern suburbs of Beirut. At times, a four-digit number of attacks were flown daily. Videos circulating on social media show various secondary explosions in many targets. Furthermore, the leadership of Hezbollah was systematically targeted. Images are circulating on social media creating the impression that the entire leadership of Hezbollah has been wiped out, are clearly exaggerated, however, most of the Hezbollah's publicly known leaders have been killed in attacks meanwhile. The most prominent victim of these targeted killings to date is the former Secretary General and thus the head of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in a major attack on the Hezbollah headquarters in Beirut on 27.09.24, along with a large part of the Hezbollah leadership and at least one general from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

The events triggered refugee movements both within Lebanon and between Lebanon and Syria. At the time this article went to press, the fighting is estimated to have resulted in at least 250,000 new internally displaced persons in Lebanon, and more than 30,000 people - mainly Syrian nationals - are said to have fled from Lebanon to Syria. The intensity of Hezbollah's rocket attacks on Israel decreased over the course of the campaign, although they had intensified initially. According to information from the Lebanese Ministry of Health on 28.09.24, 1,030 people have died in air strikes since 21.09.24, 156 of them women and 87 minors.¹²

Nigeria

South-east: Violent incidents and government countermeasures

In September 2024, unknown gunmen continued to commit acts of violence in the south-eastern states of Imo and Anambra. It is reported that these were often directed against public buildings and security forces. In some cases, the attackers used explosives and incendiary devices. The burning of office buildings and the killing of several people on 03.09.24, including members of the state security outfit Ebubeagu, an attack on a police station on the same day, the abduction of four people on 09.09.24 and an attack on another police station on 15.09.24, during which three attackers are said to have been killed, attracted media attention. The media reported that two police officers were killed in an attack on another police station just one day later. On 22.09.24, the police managed to arrest a man in Anambra state with a large quantity of bomb-making materials, reports said.

Members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group, which is in favour of the secession of south-eastern Nigeria, and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), are often held responsible for acts of violence in the region. Both organisations regularly deny such accusations. Other armed groups are also active in the region, including herdsmen belonging to the Fulani ethnic group, according to media reports. According to official information provided by the military on 26.09.2024, Nigerian armed forces killed almost 2,000 violent actors across the country in the third quarter of 2024. Military offensives are seen as an attempt at systematic countermeasures against the threat to the security situation in several parts of the country. The violence in the south-east is one facet of this.¹³

Pakistan

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Escalation of violence between Sunni and Shia tribes; security situation

At least 25 people were killed during several days of armed clashes between Shia and Sunni tribes over an ongoing land dispute in the tribal district of Kurram in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province between 21.09. and 25.09.24. Dozens of people on both sides were injured. Although Sunnis and Shiites mostly live together peacefully in the country, tensions between Sunnis and Shiites have prevailed in some areas for decades, particularly in Kurram, where Shiite Muslims predominate. In July 2024, dozens of people on both sides were killed in connection with this conflict (cf. BN of 29.07.24).

On 26.09.24, at least 15 police officers were injured in an explosion at a police station in the Swabi district, two of them seriously. No one claimed responsibility for the offence.¹⁴

Balochistan: Attack on labourers from Punjab

According to media reports, seven labourers from Punjab province were killed in Balochistan province on 28.09.24. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack. Ethnic Baloch separatist groups in the region have been rebelling against the Pakistani state for decades and mostly engage in small-scale attacks on security forces, Chinese nationals and other people from outside the province.¹⁵

Palestinian Territories / Israel

Gaza Strip: Current developments; humanitarian situation

The Hamas-led Ministry of Health stated on 26.09.24 that more than 41,534 Palestinians had been killed and 96,092 others wounded in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war. The ministry does not officially distinguish between combatants and civilians. The figures cannot be independently verified.

According to the Israeli military on 27.09.24, a total of 346 military personnel have been killed and 2,297 others wounded since the start of the ground offensives.

The war continues. Ground operations are ongoing in Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahya, in eastern Khan Younis and in Rafah. Armed groups continue to fire rockets at Israel from Khan Younis in particular. At least eleven people were killed and 22 others wounded in an air strike on a school sheltering internally displaced persons in northern Gaza on 26.09.24. The Israeli military claimed that it was targeting Hamas members inside the school who were planning an attack on Israeli troops.

On 26.09.24, gunmen shot dead an employee of an aid organisation in her car in Khan Younis. According to information from the family, the car of the deceased was erroneously identified and she should not have been the target of the attack. This is what the de facto government told the relatives. The humanitarian situation remains precarious for the internally displaced people inside the Gaza Strip. There is a lack of medication and sanitary products. Access to sanitary facilities is not sufficiently guaranteed everywhere. Food supplies are inadequate in large parts of the Gaza Strip.¹⁶

Peru

Government declares state of emergency in Lima

On 26.09.24, Defence Minister Walter Astudillo declared a 60-day state of emergency for a total of twelve districts in the metropolitan region of Lima and the neighbouring province of Callao. Since then, the number of affected districts has been increased to a total of 14. This measure is intended to permit a stronger military presence in the districts to combat the growing number of protection rackets by organised criminal groups. The announcement came after around 60 transport companies had gone on strike demanding more security in Lima. According to the transport union, at least four bus drivers have been killed in suspected extortion rackets since the end of August 2024. Various media outlets have reported three deaths. Astudillo also stated that the government would examine whether the state of emergency could be extended to other areas. In addition, a draft law is to be drawn up to classify offences such as extortion, kidnapping, contract killings and illegal possession of weapons as so-called "urban terrorism" and toughen the penalties for these offences. Furthermore, the capacity of the Challapalca high-security prison is to be expanded to accommodate people accused of these offences.¹⁷

Senegal

Dissolution of parliament and planning of new elections

Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye announced the dissolution of the opposition-dominated parliament at a press conference in Dakar on 12.09.24. He also scheduled new elections for 17.11.2024. The Constitutional Council agreed to the dissolution. Faye had won the presidential elections at the end of March 2024 with the promise of radical change (cf. BN of 08.04.24). According to media reports, the government's plans have so far been hampered by the lack of a parliamentary majority. With the early parliamentary elections Faye intends to secure the necessary majority for his camp in parliament to implement his political agenda. The current 165 MPs were elected in July 2022 under former President Macky Sall. Cooperation with the National Assembly had become difficult for Faye after members refused to enter into discussions on the budget law.¹⁸

Somalia

Renewed bomb attacks

According to media reports, a car bomb detonated near the National Theatre in Mogadishu on 28.09.24. This part of the city belongs to the security zone around the presidential palace, which is about one kilometre away from the site of the attack. It is still unclear how it was possible to detonate a car loaded with explosives in the security area of the presidential palace. The casualty figures for the attack vary. Reports say that up to six people were killed and up to ten injured.

Also on 28.09.24, an explosive device detonated at the local cattle market in the town of Jowhar in the Middle Shabelle region. According to police reports, one person was killed and three were injured. In both cases, it is not yet clear who is responsible for the attacks.¹⁹

Sudan

Ongoing battles

According to media reports, the Sudanese army (SAF) launched a large-scale offensive against positions of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia in the capital on the evening of 24.09.24. The fighting continued until at least 28.09.24.

Shortly after the outbreak of the war between the SAF and RSF in April 2023, RSF units succeeded in taking control of large parts of the capital and are holding them to this day. The latest offensive is the SAF's first major attempt in several months to recapture areas in the capital. The extent to which the offensive was successful for the SAF or whether it is continuing was not clear from previous reporting.

Fighting is also ongoing in El-Fasher, North Darfur. On 27.09.24 RSF artillery attacks killed 19 people and injured dozens. Civilian targets such as the town's cattle market and the two refugee camps Abu Shouk and Zamzam are repeatedly coming under heavy fire.²⁰

Syria

Thousands of refugees from Lebanon

According to media reports, thousands of Syrians and Lebanese have crossed the border into Syria fleeing the escalation of violence in Lebanon. In addition to the official border crossings, hundreds of people are said to have used smuggling routes to enter Syria unnoticed by the authorities. According to UNHCR estimates, a total of around 30,000 people, around 80% Syrian nationals, had fled from Lebanon by 27.09.24. Around half of these were said to be children and young people. Fewer men crossed the border than women. A report by the local broadcaster Sham FM referred to a statement by the deputy governor of Rif Dimashq, who said that around 31,000 Syrian and 11,000 Lebanese nationals are said to have crossed the border by 25.09.24. The pro-opposition media platform Syria TV referred to statements by the governor of Idlib on 28.09.24, who stated that around 40 Syrian families who came from Lebanon had been resettled in villages in rural Idlib whose residents had been forced to flee towards the Turkish border in the past. Refugees are also said to have arrived in north-eastern Syria, in areas under the control of the self-administration of northern and eastern Syria. According to media reports, those who cannot afford to flee or who fear being wanted for military or reserve service or for opposition activities are forced to stay in Lebanon.²¹

HAD and IS members killed by US air strikes

According to the US Central Command, nine members of the militia, including a high-ranking commander, were killed in an air strike on Hurras al-Din (HAD) in north-western Syria on 24.09.24. The group is an al-Qaeda-affiliated militia. A few days earlier, on 19.09.24, at least 28 IS members, including four high-ranking members, were killed in a US air strike on an IS training camp in central Syria.²²

North-east: lack of medication

On 29.09.24, North Press Agency reported about a worsening shortage of medicines in north-eastern Syria. According to the report, numerous medicines for chronic illnesses have not been available for weeks or months. Even alternatives for certain medication are no longer available. Patients suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems are among those affected. A representative of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), which controls the north-east, stated that around 30% of the most basic medicines were not available. He cited import restrictions from the areas under government control as the reason for this. The dependence on the government areas could therefore not be mitigated by importing medicines from abroad, he said.²³

North-west: Several dead in government attacks

On 29.09.24, the pro-opposition medium Syria TV quoted reports from the Syrian Civil Defence, the so-called White Helmets, according to which two civilians were killed in government artillery attacks on the village of Sarmin in north-western Syria. Other villages in western Aleppo, including Kafr Nouran, Kafr Taal and Makalbis, as well as Ayn Issa and Qalaba, are said to have been bombed by drones, artillery fire and air strikes. In the south of Idlib, the

villages of al-Ruwaiha, Sufuhan and Fleifel, as well as the outskirts of Taftanaz, are also said to have been hit by attacks. The White Helmets stated that they had recorded 650 attacks by the Syrian and Russian military up to 15.09.24. More than 54 people have been killed and 245 others injured.

A few days earlier, on 23.09.24, six people, including a child, were reportedly killed in attacks on the village of Kafriyya in eastern Idlib. Eleven others were reportedly injured.²⁴

Türkiye

Raid on Kurdish language centre, bookshop and educational cooperative

According to media reports, a Kurdish language centre called Mezopotamya Language and Culture Research Association (MED-DER), a Kurdish bookshop called Payîz Pirtûk and an educational cooperative for language and art called Anka in Diyarbakir were raided on 24.09.24. A total of 30 people were arrested in the course of investigations by the Diyarbakir Public Prosecutor's Office and other related arrests in Izmir and Mardin. Among those detained were some editors as well as co-chairs and employees of the institutions. Around the same time, the homes of employees were searched. According to press reports, no lawyers were present during the searches and the detainees were initially unable to gain access to legal counsellors as a 24-hour contact ban had been imposed. There are different reports regarding the release of the detainees. Seven or eight of the detainees are said to have been released by 27.09.24 after submitting their statements to the public prosecutor's office. The remaining detainees were taken to the court building in Diyarbakir on 27.09.24 for interrogation by the public prosecutor's office. In addition, over 500 books, textbooks, magazines and hard discs were confiscated. The Public Prosecutor's Office alleges that the content of the confiscated works is close to the ideology of the PKK and constitutes terror propaganda. MED-DER and Payîz Pirtûk stated that the books and newspapers were legal and could be purchased in Türkiye through normal channels. Secrecy orders were issued for the case files, restricting access to investigation details for legal counsel. The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Equality Party (DEM) criticised the authority's actions on the social network X as suppression of the Kurdish language and culture. It stated that the Kurdish people would not be prevented from preserving their mother tongue despite this policy.²⁵

Ukraine

Civilian victims, torture, abduction and re-education of Ukrainian children

According to Ukrainian authorities on 23.09.24, one person was killed in a Russian attack in the Kherson region. According to the governor, one person was killed in another Russian attack on Zaporizhia on 23.09.24. Also as a result of a Russian attack, three civilians were killed in Kharkiv on 24.09.24, according to the authorities. According to media reports from 25.09.24, another person was killed in another Russian attack in the Zaporizhzhya region. The previous day, a civilian was killed by Russian fire in the Sumy region. According to the governor, at least two people were killed in a Russian bomb attack in Kramatorsk (Donetsk region) on 25.09.24. According to the responsible governor, one person died near the city of Kherson as a result of Russian shelling on 26.09.24. In the port city of Ismajil on the Danube (Odessa region), at least three people died in a Russian drone attack, the authorities informed on 27.09.24. Also on 27.09.24, at least four people were killed in a Russian missile attack in the city of Kryvyi Rih (Dnipropetrovsk region). According to the authorities, at least ten people were killed in two Russian attacks on a hospital in Sumy on 28.09.24, with the second attack occurring when the rescue services were evacuating hospital staff and patients. According to the governor, a total of four civilians were also killed in two Russian air strikes in the Kharkiv region on 28.09.24, including a judge of the Supreme Court of Ukraine.

According to a communication from a commission of enquiry commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council on 23.09.24, new evidence of "widespread and systematic torture by Russian state authorities and armed forces against Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war" is emerging. According to a report forwarded to the Council, torture, including sexual violence, are used "as a common and acceptable practice [...] with impunity" in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation itself. The commission also stated that medical care for Ukrainian prisoners is deliberately withheld in Russian-controlled prisons and that doctors are even involved in torture in one prison.

According to media reports from 24.09.24, Ukrainian human rights groups, together with Freedom House, have called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate Belarus and the Russian Federation as they have evidence that "hundreds of Ukrainian children were forcibly brought to Belarus during Russia's large-scale invasion and are being "re-educated" to turn against their homeland". Accordingly, the report submitted to the ICC documents the "political indoctrination and military re-education of Ukrainian children on the territory of Belarus." In addition to information on the financing and implementation of the "re-education programme", the report also lists 18 identified institutions in Belarus and 2,219 Ukrainian children aged six and over who were affected. According to a statement by Ukrainian Human Rights Commissioner Dmytro Lubinez, nine children who had been transferred to the Russian Federation were able to return to Ukraine on 27.09.24 through the mediation of Qatar.²⁶

War effort

According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, the small town of Ukrajinsk (Donetsk region) has been captured by the Russian armed forces. It is located on the fiercely contested section of the front between Pokrovsk, Kurakhove and the town of Vuhledar, which is surrounded by Russian troops. While confirmation from the Kyiv military leadership is still pending, Ukrainian military observers have been labelling the situation near Ukrajinsk as Russian-controlled for days.²⁷

Energy infrastructure

According to a statement from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), EUR 70 million is to be made available to Ukraine for the winter to equip cities and municipalities with small-scale combined heat and power plants, boilers, generators and solar power systems. The BMZ hopes that this will help to rebuild the power supply and decentralise it. The Ukrainian Ministry of Energy assumes that, despite repair efforts, noticeable power cuts in winter will be unavoidable.²⁸

Russian judgement against Ukrainian after accusation of espionage

The Supreme Court of Russian-occupied Crimea announced on 23.09.24 that it had sentenced a Ukrainian citizen to 14 years in prison for espionage. The trial initially took place in March 2024 in the Russian region of Sverdlovsk and was later transferred to Crimea. The defendant was accused of collecting military data in the partially Russian-occupied Zaporizhia region for the Ukrainian secret service.²⁹

Venezuela

UN Fact Finding Mission documents increase in repression

On 17.09.24, the independent international UN Fact Finding Mission for Venezuela published a report on the human rights situation since 01.09.23. The report documents the intensification of the repression of political dissidents and those perceived as such throughout the entire period under review and especially since the presidential election on 28.07.24. The repression has led to human rights violations, including killings, arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances and sexualised and gender-based violence, which are to be seen as a systematic suppression of all dissidence, and in their entirety constitute a crime against humanity. As part of the mission, which has been active in the country since 2019 under a mandate from the UN Human Rights Council, it was documented that recently also minors had been charged with serious offences such as terrorism as part of the repression. Cases of sexualised violence also increased after the presidential election. According to the report, 158 minors were detained during the post-election protests, some of whom were subjected to sexualised violence.³⁰

Yemen

Israeli attacks against Houthis

On 29.09.24, the Israeli army (IDF) attacked Houthi targets in the port of Hodeida. Israel stated that this was a response to attacks by the Iran-aligned Houthis against Israel in the previous days. According to the IDF, the attacks targeted power plants and a harbour facility in Hodeida, which the Houthis use for importing oil and weapons from Iran. According to the Houthi-controlled Ministry of Health, at least four people were killed and 29 injured by these attacks.³¹

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