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Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Afghanistan – July to December 2023

31 December 2023

03 July 2023

Security Situation

On 26.06.23, more clashes occurred between Taliban fighters and Pakistani border guards at the disputed border. Two Taliban fighters and five Pakistani soldiers were reportedly killed. The National Resistance Front (NRF) said on 28.06.23 that it had killed one Taliban fighter and injured two others in an attack on the Taliban in Baghlan province.

New UNAMA report on civilian casualties

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded 3,774 civilian casualties (1,095 killed, 2,679 injured), including 233 women (92 killed, 141 injured) and 866 children (287 killed, 579 injured) in the period between the Taliban takeover on 15.08.21 and 30.05.23. Most civilian casualties during this period were caused by improvised explosive device (IED) attacks (2,814 civilian casualties), explosive remnants of war (639 civilian casualties), and targeted killings (148 civilian casualties). Of the 3,774 civilian casualties, three-quarters were caused by explosive attacks in populated areas, including places of worship, schools, and markets. According to UNAMA, the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), was responsible for most of the IED attacks, including suicide bombings. More than 1,700 Afghan civilian deaths and injuries were attributed to attacks claimed by ISKP.

Persecution situation

According to a report of 22.06.23, the Taliban in Parwan province (Bagram district) punished youths who trimmed or shortened their beards. In Baghlan province, three barbers were reportedly arrested for trimming beards on 27.06.23. On the same day, in Kabul province, the Taliban reportedly killed a farmer who had not paid taxes levied on agriculture. On 02.07.23, it was reported that the Emir had issued a decree that all beauty salons throughout the country must be closed by 24.07.23. As these salons are mainly run by women, this means that throughout the country more women who have been providing for their families with this income, will become unemployed.

Governance

The Taliban have released an audio tape attributed to Emir Hibatullah Akhundzada, who apparently held a sermon after the Eid al-Adha prayer in Kandahar on Wednesday. It includes the proclamation that the relevant ministries and the Taliban leadership are drafting a new legal system based on Sharia and Hanafi jurisdiction. It will replace the laws in force under the former constitution, including separate Shia jurisdiction. He said that Afghanistan now has a fully Islamic system, security is guaranteed and there is no disorder or insubordination in any part of the country. Most of the country's affairs are now governed on the basis of directives and decrees attributed to the Emir. He said, "under the rule of the Islamic Emirate, concrete measures have been taken to liberate women from many traditional oppressions." In the Persian and Pashto versions of the message, the top Taliban leader also welcomes the introduction of Sharia courts and practices, including qisas (e.g. floggings or executions) performed before a public audience.

According to the Washington Post of 28.06.23, almost two years after the Taliban took power, health care in rural Afghanistan has deteriorated rapidly as the full impact of the prolonged economic crisis is felt. Doctors, nurses, and local officials said they were facing an onslaught of patients who, until recently, had preferred to go to private doctors for a small fee but had run out of savings.

10 July 2023

Security situation

According to the exile media outlet Hasht-e Sobh, the National Resistance Front (NRF) shot a Taliban commander in Kunduz province on 06.07.23. The armed opposition group Freedom Corps reportedly attacked a Taliban base in Kabul with rockets on 06.07.23. According to a media report on 06.07.23, an imam was killed in the Kohistan district in the north-eastern province of Kapisa. The anti-Taliban armed group Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) claimed responsibility for the attack. The AFF said that the imam was a Taliban.

According to a Foreign Policy article of 05.07.23, the US military left behind weapons worth about seven billion US-Dollars when withdrawing from Afghanistan. These are now being sold by different actors including the Taliban and turn up in various trouble spots. Terrorist groups in Pakistan (Pakistani Taliban, separatists in Balochistan) are already fighting with these weapons, the article said. More of the equipment is said to have been spotted in Kashmir and the Gaza Strip. According to experts, however, it is unclear why the USA would have left these weapons behind, thus indirectly contributing to destabilising the region. According to the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), the Taliban had taken possession of more than 300,000 light weapons, 26,000 heavy weapons and about 61,000 military vehicles. Many members of the former army are also said to have sold their weapons due to the economic crisis.

Persecution situation

On 03.07.23, the body of a member of the former army was found on the outskirts of Jalalabad city, Nangarhar province. No further details are known. According to a Twitter message on 06.07.23 sent by the former governor of Balkh province, Mohammad Atta Noor, a former commander of the Afghan Local Police (ALP), Lal Mohammad Gharibzada, had been killed in the province by the Taliban. He had reportedly returned to Balkh from Iran after receiving assurances from the Taliban's special commission to facilitate the return of prominent Afghans to the country. The Taliban did not comment on the matter.

Governance

On 04.07.23, the Taliban ordered the nationwide closure of beauty salons for women by 25.07.23. In a video message published on Twitter on 07.07.23, the spokesman for the Ministry of Virtue, Mohammad Sidiq Akif, said that hair extensions and eyebrow plucking were against Sharia law. In Ghazni province, family members of female beauty salon owners had also been summoned by the local Ministry of Virtue, a news report stated on 06.07.23. The family members were threatened with punishment if the salons were not closed. The salons are mostly run by women. International organisations criticise the progressive exclusion of women from public life and the cutting of more jobs for women. According to a report on 04.07.23, the Taliban had imposed a night curfew from 10 pm in certain districts of Ghazni province for no apparent reason.

Humanitarian situation

The WFP announced that in view of the current status of donations for Afghanistan, its programmes can only be funded until October. Even now, not all people needing support can be provided with food, the WFP said. When the funding runs out, there will be no more aid for the five million people currently supported by the WFP.

Heavy rains and flooding killed two people in Nangarhar province on 03.07.23. In Ghazni province, about 800 hectares of agricultural land and ten houses were destroyed by floods on 08.07.23.

17 July 2023

Persecution situation

According to reports on 13.07.23, Voice of America (VOA) reporter Latif Yaqoubi was arrested by the Taliban in south-eastern Ghazni province on 10.07.23. Reports on 12.07.23 said that the Taliban publicly flogged four people, including a woman, for "moral crimes" in Kabul's Paghman district. In Maidan Wardak province, two men and a woman were publicly flogged, according to reports on 10.07.23. A media report on 11.07.23 said that Aleem Jan, a former Mujahideen commander, was shot dead by unknown gunmen in Afghanistan's Kapisa province. On 12.07.23 it was reported that the intensification of the conflict between the Taliban and the National Resistance Front (NRF) forcibly displaced dozens of families from four villages in the Shotul district of the northern province of Panjshir. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) informed on 12.07.23 that the Taliban destroyed a refugee camp in Kabul, evicting an estimated 280 families from their settlements and killing two children during the evacuation.

Governance

On 13.07.23, the Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an instruction to its employees inside and outside Afghanistan urging them to observe religious practices. The Taliban also issued an order to close down teacher training centres, according to a news report of 14.07.23. These centres had been established to improve teachers' skills and provide two-year education programmes in almost all provinces. The Taliban Ministry of Education said that the approximately 6,000 teachers and staff at the centres would be assigned to schools to teach. Apparently, this decision has shocked many teachers, as their livelihoods depend solely on the salaries earned at the training centres, especially in the provinces where the job market is much tighter than in the capital Kabul.

24 July 2023

Security situation: Taliban fighting with resistance groups

The National Resistance Front (NRF) informed that it killed two Taliban fighters and wounded two others in Baghlan province on 18.07.23. The NRF also said that fighters were killed and wounded when it attacked a Taliban base in Kabul on 15.07.23. The Afghanistan Islamic and National Freedom Movement reported killing four Taliban fighters in Nangarhar province on 15.07.23.

Persecution situation

On 17.07.23, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) published a report on the current human rights situation. The report emphasises the violent implementation of the Taliban's decrees, especially the restrictions on women's rights that have been introduced. It also mentions the ongoing extra-judicial killings of former security forces and the severe restrictions on the media. On 19.07.23, women protested against the closure of beauty salons in Kabul (cf. BN of 10.07.23). The Taliban allegedly ended the demonstration by firing in the air and using water cannons, they took away several women. On 19.07.23, three women and one man were arrested for "moral offences" in Takhar province, two men were publicly flogged in Loghar province for the same reason. On the same day, the arrest of a journalist by the Taliban in Nangarhar province was reported. An increasing number of arrests of women wearing headscarves and cloaks instead of full body veils (burqa or chador) were reported from Herat on 16.07.23.

Governance: Ministry of Virtue burns musical instruments

According to the Taliban Ministry of Virtue, the Taliban burnt musical instruments confiscated across the country in recent months on 19.07.23. The Ministry of Virtue showed photos of the burning on its Twitter account and stated that these instruments were used to promote "corruption" and "evil" in society.

Humanitarian situation

According to reports on 23.07.23, at least 31 people were killed and 74 injured across the country in floods following heavy rain; 41 others are missing. The flash floods particularly affected the capital Kabul and the provinces of Maidan Wardak (Jalrez district) and Ghazni.

31 July 2023

Security situation: Taliban fighting with resistance groups

The National Resistance Front (NRF) informed that it killed six Taliban fighters in Nuristan, Laghman, Nangarhar and Kapisa provinces on 25.07. and 28.07.23.

Persecution situation

The Taliban reportedly killed a former government employee in Kunduz province and a former police commander in Laghman province on 23.07.23. On 24.07.23, a man was reportedly killed by the Taliban for failing to convince his brother, who is wanted by the Taliban, to return to Afghanistan. According to a report on 26.07.23, the director of a local radio station was arrested in Maymana, Faryab province. On 30.07.23, several government employees were detained by the Taliban in Herat for not wearing beards. On 29.07.23, a Taliban member shot and killed a man during an argument in Parwan province.

The Taliban have ordered the Shia community to refrain from hoisting religious flags and banners, setting up the usual refreshment stalls, travelling in convoys and reciting lament poems on public transport during the Islamic New Year month of Muharram. The Shia observe Muharram as a month of mourning because on the tenth day, Ashura, the third Imam for them, Hussein, fell in the battle of Karbala. On Ashura (27.07./28.07.23), the Taliban cut telecommunications and internet connections in several cities. On 28.07.23, the Taliban broke up a gathering in Ghazni using water cannons, beatings and gunshots. At least two people (four, according to other reports) died and many others were injured.

Governance

On 26.07.23, the Taliban closed down all of the approximately 12,000 beauty salons (cf. BN of 10.07.23), leaving some 60,000 women unemployed nationwide.

According to a report of 26.07.23, a high-ranking Talib announced that ties are Christian symbols (crosses) and should therefore not be worn in Afghanistan.

Humanitarian situation

According to reports of 24.07.23, the UN World Food Programme must exclude eight million Afghans affected by hunger from humanitarian support due to a lack of funds.

Nearly 50 people have died in severe flooding in several provinces, according to a report on 25.07.23.

07 August 2023

Security situation

According to a UN Security Council report on the development of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS) published on 25.07.23, al-Qaeda as well as some 20 other terrorist groups are gaining strength in Afghanistan.

Persecution situation

The Taliban closed down a radio and television station in Jalalabad on 31.08.23, after a mixed-gender journalism training had been offered there. Two other radio stations in the building were also shut down.

As a result of a land conflict between Pashtun nomads (Kuchi) and the sedentary population of Nahur district (Ghazni province), the Taliban arrested 17 local residents on 01.08.23. The Taliban are accused of being biased in favour of the Kuchi.

According to media reports, a man from the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) was accused of spying for the Taliban and shot dead in Kunar Province on the same day.

On 06.08.23, according to media reports, a former policeman died in Badakhshan province after allegedly being arrested and tortured several times by the Taliban.

Videos of protests are circulating on social media after a Talib in Faryab province tried to coerce a 13-year-old girl into a forced marriage.

Humanitarian situation

According to UN OCHA, Afghanistan is particularly hard hit by climate change. Severe droughts negatively impact its agriculture, on which 60% of the population depends. Reduced availability of water accelerates the spread of diseases. At the same time, flooding occurs repeatedly. These conditions are exacerbating the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

Government business

For the first time since the Taliban assumed power, direct talks between the Taliban and the US government took place in Doha/Qatar, on 31.07. and 01.08.23. Among the matters discussed were the humanitarian crisis, the economic situation, drug trafficking and human rights. The US declared its willingness to talk and stressed that it has no intention to recognize the Taliban government.

According to reports on 05.08.23, the Taliban have banned girls over the age of ten from attending school in several provinces, including Ghazni.

14 August 2023

Security situation

On 07.08. and 08.08.23, the National Resistance Front (NRF) and the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) reported killing a total of three Taliban fighters and wounding four others in Badakhshan province. The NRF also reported casualties on its side. On 12.08.23, the AFF in Baghlan province reported killing two Taliban fighters and wounding four others.

Persecution situation

The Taliban had nine people, including one woman, publicly flogged for moral corruption in Faryab, Jowzjan and Nangarhar provinces, according to a report on 12.08.23. On the same day, the NGO Rawadari informed that at least 10 people have died as a result of massive torture in Taliban prisons in the last six months. According to a report on 12.08.23 women and girls publicly protested for the revocation of the Doha Agreement between the Taliban and the US in Takhar and Badakhshan provinces. There were no reports of the Taliban's response to the protests.

According to reports by exile media Hasht-e Subh on 10.08.23, the Taliban arrested and tortured at least 40 civilians in Khaja Omari district (Ghazni province) following the assassination of the Taliban's intelligence chief.

A Hasht-e Subh report of 09.08.23 said that at least 30 prosecutors have been murdered and 11 others injured by the Taliban or former convicted criminals since the Taliban came to power in August 2021.

As reported on 08.08.23, the Taliban have arrested and, in some cases, tortured at least 50 employees of a private security company in Panjshir province for possession of weapons in the past two months. The arrests are believed to be related to NRF activities. On the same day, it was reported that a commander of the former army was shot dead by unknown persons in Sar-e Pul province. He had fled to Iran after the Taliban took power and recently returned to Afghanistan.

On 07.08.23, the Taliban arrested eight men and two women in Takhar province on charges of "moral corruption" (such as adultery).

Governance

The Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC) reports that local Taliban officials in Nangarhar province have banned the operation of two more radio stations, having previously blocked the Hamesha Bahar Radio and Television station in the city of Jalalabad (cf. BN of 07.08.23).

A US-mandated audit of the Afghan central bank (Da Afghanistan Bank) has found that the bank must take measures to ensure its independence from the government as well as measures against money laundering and financing terrorism. Only then could funds frozen in the US be transferred to Da Afghanistan Bank.

Economic situation

According to the Taliban, due to climate conditions, the grape harvest in Herat province was 30% lower this year than in 2022.

21 August 2023

Second anniversary of Taliban takeover of power

On 15.08.23, the Taliban celebrated the second anniversary of their takeover with rallies and parades. The Taliban government designated 15 August as a public holiday. They stated that they had established an "Islamic system", expelled the invaders and restored security in the country. At the same time, strict security checks were in place on the anniversary day. A parade in the city of Kandahar was cancelled; according to official statements, to avoid disturbing the public. Numerous international organisations published statements and reports criticising the Taliban. For example, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennet, stated that the Taliban had committed numerous and at the same time systematic human rights violations in the last two years, refuting assumptions that they were more moderate now than during their first rule (1996 - 2001). Furthermore, restrictions originally declared to be temporary contributed to an "accelerated, systematic and all-encompassing system of segregation, marginalisation and persecution". The Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, TTP), on the other hand, congratulated in a statement on social media and called on the "oppressed people" of Pakistan to wage jihad against the government in order to establish an "Islamic system" there as well.

Security situation

According to media reports on 19.08.23, a senior commander of the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), Dost Mohammad, was killed in an air strike in Nangarhar province. On 14.08.23, there was an explosion at a hotel in Khost. At least three people died. Pakistani media report that this may have been a drone attack by the Pakistani army on Hafiz Gul Bahadur, one of the commanders of the TTP. The Pakistani government accuses the Taliban of doing too little against the TTP, whose attacks are planned on Afghan soil and have increased drastically since the Taliban took power. In Taloqan, capital of Takhar province, a car bomb exploded on 15.08.23 under unclear circumstances. According to different reports, two people were injured or four Taliban were killed and three others and two civilians were injured. The Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) announced an attack on a Taliban base in Parwan province on the same day, killing five Taliban fighters and injuring three others.

Governance

Abdul Hakim Sharai, the Taliban's acting Minister of Justice, banned any activities of political parties in the country at a press conference on 16.08.23. He said that the existence of political parties in the country was neither based on Sharia nor beneficial to the nation. According to the BBC, the number of religious schools in the country has increased fivefold under the two-year Taliban rule.

Persecution & Humanitarian Situation

According to a report by the exile press medium Hasht-e Sobh on 20.08.23, eight women who wanted to hold a protest march were detained by the Taliban in Kabul. According to a report by the Taliban Supreme Court on 17.08.23, 19 people convicted of adultery and robbery, among other charges, were publicly flogged in a sports stadium in Sarpul province. According to a report by the NGO Afghan Witness on 15.08.23, 3,329 human rights violations by the Taliban have been reported since 15.01.22, including violations of the right to life, the right to freedom from torture, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and women's rights.

Save the Children has published a report that points to a dire humanitarian situation. 38.4 % of 1,205 children surveyed in six provinces work to support their families. 76.1% of them said they currently had less food than a year ago, the report said. IOM pointed out that 79% of people in Afghanistan do not have adequate access to clean water. Women's groups in Afghanistan protested on social media and released statements drawing attention to the human rights violations against women by the Taliban.

28 August 2023

Security situation

The National Resistance Front (NRF) says it killed one Taliban fighter and injured two others in Parwan province on 25.08.23. The Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) informed that it killed three Taliban fighters and injured seven others in Laghman and Kandahar provinces on 27.08.23.

Persecution situation

On 22.08.23, the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) published its report on the persecution of members of the former government by the Taliban. In the period from 15.08.21 to 30.06.23, UNAMA documented at least 800 cases of human rights violations, including extra-judicial killings (218), arbitrary arrests and detentions (424), torture and ill-treatment (144) as well as enforced disappearances (14) linked to the former government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and its security forces. The media are reporting more incidents all the time. On 23.08.23, residents of Kandahar province alleged that certain local Taliban leaders are operating private prisons where they are reportedly holding former officials and military personnel of the former republic. According to news reports on 22.08.23, a military official of the former government was arrested by the Taliban in Parwan province. According to media reports on 23.08.23, a young man from Panjshir who wanted to leave for Iran was detained by the Taliban in Herat province. He died after 22 days in detention from the torture he had been subjected to. On 27.08.23, the Taliban allegedly fired on a motorcade of a wedding in Laghman province because loud music was being played. One student was reportedly killed.

Further restrictions for women

On 24.08.23, the Taliban stopped about 100 women who had received a scholarship to study in Dubai and wanted to travel there in a chartered plane from leaving the country. Some of the women had the male escort demanded by the Taliban with them. On 26.08.23, the Taliban-appointed Minister of Virtue, Mohammad Khaled Hanafi, declared that women were forbidden to visit the Band-e Amir chain of lakes in Bamyan province, which is very popular as a holiday destination.

04 September 2023

Security situation

The National Islamic Freedom Front announced that it attacked a Taliban district administration building in Paktika province on 03.09.23, killing four Taliban fighters. In a similar attack on the same day in Laghman province, the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) claimed to have killed two Taliban fighters.

Persecution situation

Between 27.08 and 01.09.23, the Taliban reportedly arrested a total of 18 civilians from Baghlan and Panjshir provinces. In some cases, they were accused of supporting the National Resistance Front (NRF). In other cases, the reasons are unclear.

On 01.09.23, the Taliban reportedly arrested at least six men in Mazar-e Sharif for listening to music.

The Taliban reportedly arrested a former soldier who had returned to Afghanistan from Iran in Takhar on 02.09.23. On 02.09.23 the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA) issued a statement saying that nine journalists had been released from Taliban custody within 20 days. Official reasons for the arrests as well as the different lengths of detentions and the dates of the release were not given.

A report in the Guardian on 28.08.23 shows that the suicide rate among women has increased significantly since the Taliban came to power. The Taliban have banned the publication of such data and the report is based on research in hospitals. In Afghanistan, the suicide rate among women is now higher than among men, which is unusual in a global comparison.

Governance

According to their own information, the Taliban have installed 62,000 surveillance cameras in Kabul and are planning to mount more cameras throughout the country. There are reports that the Chinese telecommunications company Huawei is involved in setting up the surveillance network.

11 September 2023

Security situation

At the Torkham border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan, fire was exchanged between security forces of both countries on 06.09.23. According to Pakistani authorities, the Taliban had set up a checkpoint in a restricted area and responded to Pakistani objections by firing. According to the Taliban, the first shots were fired by the

Pakistani border posts. Two Taliban and two Pakistani soldiers were reportedly killed. The border crossing, which is also important for freight traffic, was closed. According to a report by exile media Hasht-e Sobh on 08.09.23, the Taliban are withdrawing fighters from checkpoints in Panjshir province and moving them to the borders with Pakistan and Iran.

Persecution situation

Citing local sources, it was reported on 05.09.23 that a Taliban commander had forcibly seized local people's land in Takhar province to dig for gold.

An officer of the former army was found shot dead in his flat on 07.09.23. The background is unclear. According to a report on 08.09.23, the Taliban arrested, tortured and then shot a former officer in Kapisa province. He had allegedly been arrested three times before on charges of collaborating with the National Resistance Front (NRF). According to a report on 09.09.23, the Taliban killed a former soldier and another man in Balkh province on charges of kidnapping. On 11.09.23, the Taliban reportedly arrested a student in Takhar province on charges of collaborating with the NRF. A report of 08.09.23 said that Taliban killed one person in Kandahar during an argument.

A report by HRW dated 08.09.23 categorises the Taliban's policy towards women and girls as "gender-based persecution" and thus a crime against humanity.

Economic and humanitarian situation

According to the WFP, humanitarian aid for another two million people will have to be cut. Due to a lack of funding, a total of 10 million needy people cannot be supported with food aid. In the main harvest season, it is foreseeable that important harvests such as wheat will reach a more acceptable level than last year but will still remain below average. Thus, food insecurity persists and is most serious in the northern and north-eastern provinces. At the same time, the Taliban-appointed Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar described the economic situation as stable at an economic conference with local and international businessmen in Kabul on 06.09.23. The value of the Afghani to the US dollar has increased. However, it is assumed that the exchange rate has been artificially controlled rather than that the economic situation has improved sustainably.

18 September 2023

Security situation

According to its own statements, the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) attacked a Taliban base in Laghman province, killing two Taliban and injuring four others.

Persecution situation

In Takhar province, a retired former soldier was shot dead on 11.09.23, on 12.09.23 a former commander of the pro-government militia "Popular Uprising" was also shot dead. The Taliban are accused of committing these murders. According to reports on 13.09.23, the Taliban arrested four former soldiers in Parwan province.

On 10.09.23, the Taliban arrested about 30 students at the university dormitory in Maimana, capital of Faryab province, for listening to music. They were released after one night with their heads shaved but were not allowed to re-enter the dormitory.

In Parwan province, the Taliban allegedly first tortured and then shot dead the brother of a member of the Jamiat-e Islami party on 12.09.23. In Ghazni, the Taliban allegedly shot dead a 23-year-old man at a checkpoint on 17.09.23. On 03.09. and 13.09.23, 18 employees of the Swiss aid organisation International Assistance Mission (IAM), including one US citizen, were arrested by the Taliban in Ghor province. It is reported that the Taliban accuse them of attempting to proselytise. IAM claims to have no further information on the arrests. IAM is mainly active in the health and education sectors.

According to reports on 15.09.23, the Taliban arrested two gardeners of Ahmad Shah Massoud's tomb in Panjshir province. Ahmad Shah Massoud was one of the most important so-called Mujaheddin of the 1980s and father of the leader of the National Resistance Front (NRF).

On 12.09. and 17.09.23, Taliban courts in Kandahar and Zabul provinces sentenced a total of 17 people to flogging and imprisonment for murder, extramarital affairs and theft.

Ethnic conflicts

An increase in violence against Hazaras is reported from Uruzgan province. The report is prompted by an unsolved murder committed in Joy-e Naw village, Khas district, Uruzgan province on 12.09.23. The report says that in this village alone, 14 more unsolved murders had occurred since August 2021, 400 fruit trees were reportedly destroyed and 20 houses set on fire. On 12.09. and 13.09.23, the Taliban arrested 26 people in Bamyan province related to land conflicts with Pashtun nomads.

Land conflicts between Hazaras and Pashtun nomads occur time and again and the Taliban are accused of siding with the Pashtuns.

Economic situation

After nine days, the Torkham border crossing was reopened on 15.09.23 (cf. BN of 11.09.23). Hundreds of trucks were waiting at the border. Many trucks with perishable goods had already turned back.

25 September 2023

Security situation

According to its own statements, the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) killed a Taliban commander and wounded four other fighters in Baghlan Province on 20.09.23. On 24.09.23, the AFF attacked a Taliban prison in Mazar-e Sharif. One Taliban fighter was reportedly killed during this attack.

Persecution situation

A report published by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on 20.09.23 examines the prison conditions under the Taliban between January 2022 and July 2023. During this period, UNAMA was able to document 1,600 human rights violations committed by the Taliban in detention centres. Women were affected in 11% of the cases. In addition to the hitherto known torture methods, such as electric shocks and beatings, the Taliban also use waterboarding. The report also documents how detainees are forced to make confessions, are not allowed to contact the outside world and their families are not informed about the arrests. The Taliban denied the allegations.

On 19.09.23, the Taliban arrested women's rights activist Neda Parwarni along with her husband and four-year-old son.

A former soldier was found dead after being arrested by the Taliban in the city of Kandahar on 15.09.23, according to a report on 19.09.23. Reportedly, he had been threatened by the Taliban earlier and tried to leave the country. According to a report on 19.09.23, a former army officer was found stabbed to death. Eyewitnesses said, he had been arrested by the Taliban before. However, the exact circumstances are unclear. On 20.09.23, the Taliban arrested a former soldier in Takhar province. They had rounded up all the people of his village and questioned them individually.

On 21.09.23, the Taliban seized parts of the equipment of a television and a radio station in Daikuni province. The background is unclear.

Economic and humanitarian situation

According to the report of 22.09.23, the Asian Development Bank and the EU have pledged a total of almost USD 550 million for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan.

A report dated 24.09.23 cites both testimonies and documents as evidence that the Taliban are deliberately diverting humanitarian aid from the Hazara-majority Daikundi province to Pashtun-majority provinces such as Ghazni and Uruzgan. It is also said that aid organisations have been prevented from doing their work in Daikundi.

09 October 2023

Earthquake and humanitarian situation

According to information from the Taliban, at least 2,400 died as a result of an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.3 on the Richter scale and several aftershocks on 07.10.23. The epicentre was situated 35 km to the north-west of the city of Herat. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has reported 1,023 dead and many more injured. A number of villages were completely destroyed.

Many people reportedly have no reserves for the winter, making the humanitarian situation even more precarious. In addition, more than 100,000 Afghans have been deported from Iran since July 2023. The Afghan embassy in Pakistan reported on 03.10.23 that 1,000 Afghans had been arrested in Pakistan in the previous two weeks, although many of these were registered as refugees in Pakistan. Pakistan's interior minister, Sarfraz Bugti, announced on 03.10.23 that more than one million Afghan refugees would be deported from Pakistan in November 2023 if they had failed to leave the country by then. He accused the refugees of supporting terrorism and smuggling drugs. Iran has also announced further deportations.

A rise in the number of COVID cases in Kabul was reported on 28.09.23. Eight people allegedly died of COVID in the space of one week at the Afghan Japan Hospital.

Security situation

Six children died in explosions of old munitions and land mines in the two northern provinces of Faryab and Jowzjan between 25.09. and 02.10.23. In all, 640 children were killed in such explosions between January 2022 and June 2023.

An exchange of fire between the Taliban and Pakistani border soldiers occurred at the Spin Boldak/Chaman border crossing point on 04.10.23. An elderly man and a 12 year-old boy were reportedly killed.

According to information from the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) and the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF), attacks on Taliban bases in Parwan and Kabul provinces took place on 27.09., 28.09. and 05.10.23. In response, the Taliban arrested 20 local residents near Kabul on 05.10.23.

Persecution

According to investigations by the Etilaat Roz newspaper, which is published by journalists in exile, 61 people were killed and 129 arrested in August and September 2023. Many of those concerned were former members of the security forces, but in the majority of cases the precise circumstances are unclear. Arrests of former members of the security forces were also reported on 03.10. and 06.10.23.

On 27.09.23 the Taliban closed down the Nasim radio station in Daykundi province. The station's director and two journalists were arrested. On the same day, the Taliban arrested Julia Parsi, a women's rights activist and founder of a library for women, together with her child in Kabul. Conflicts between Pashtunian nomads and the local population were reported from Bamyan province on 26.09., 03.10. and 04.10.23. The Taliban reportedly broke up the clashes by use of force.

16 October 2023

Further earthquakes in Herat province

On 15.10.23 an earthquake of force 6.3 on the Richter scale occurred in Herat province, with its epicentre in the Rabat-e-Sangi district. Four people were reportedly killed and some 150 injured. A force 6.3 earthquake had only recently occurred in Herat province on 11.10.23, with the epicentre located in the districts of Injil and Guzara. Two people were reportedly killed, 117 injured and around one thousand homes were destroyed. Various historic buildings in Herat (including the Blue Mosque) are said to have been damaged.

An earthquake with its epicentre 35 km to the north-west of the city of Herat had already occurred on 07.10.23, with the Taliban reporting a death toll of at least 2,400 (cf. BN of 09.10.23). On 13.10.23 the Taliban more than halved the stated numbers of casualties, to approximately 1,000 killed and 2,000 injured.

Expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan

On 11.10.23 the Capital Development Authority Islamabad began demolishing a number of homes of Afghan refugees without residence permits in the Margalla Town district. On 03.10.23 the Pakistani foreign minister, Bugti, ordered all persons who are in the country illegally (the majority of whom are Afghans) to leave Pakistan by 01.11.23 (cf. BN of 09.10.23).

Security situation and governance

Up to 30 people were reportedly killed and many others injured in an explosion during Friday prayers at the Shiite Imam Zamam mosque in Baghlan's provincial capital of Pul-e-Khumri. The Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) has claimed responsibility for the attack.

On 14.10.23 the Taliban government condemned “Israel’s barbaric bombing of the Gaza Strip and the poor Palestinians” on its website, without mentioning the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas before the bombing. They are calling on all Islamic countries to support the Palestinians. Back in February 2022, the Taliban consecrated a replica of the Al-Aqsa mosque at a roundabout as a token of solidarity with Palestine and in its monthly magazine Al-Somood (issue no. 196), they wrote that the twin city of Jerusalem must be “liberated” - as Kabul had been. There are unconfirmed reports that US weapons originating from Afghanistan have come to light in the possession of Hamas.

The Taliban government has been officially invited to next week’s Silk Road summit, as a sign of growing cooperation. China has stepped up its involvement with the Taliban. It is the first country since the Taliban took over power to appoint an ambassador in Kabul and to invest in mining projects.

23 October 2023

Earthquakes and humanitarian situation

Another earthquake (force 4.1) occurred in Herat province on 19.10.23. The UN estimates that over 21,500 houses have been destroyed and 17,000 severely damaged in the earthquakes in Herat province (cf. BN of 09.10. and 16.10.23). More than 154,000 people are believed to have been affected by the consequences of the earthquakes. Women account for a disproportionately large share of this total, because they were at home when the earthquakes occurred, while many men were at work outside. Both directly affected people and those whose homes have escaped damage are currently staying outside for fear of new earthquakes. In the city of Herat a woman is reported to have died because she had no protection from the cold of the night.

Security situation

On 21.10.23 the minister for energy and water appointed by the Taliban declared in a public speech in Kunduz province that Al Qaeda is not a terrorist organisation, but “brothers” of the Taliban.

Persecution

A man is reported to have died on 17.10.23 after being tortured by the Taliban. He was arrested by the Taliban some six months ago, after having shared a photograph of the National Resistance Front (NRF) on Facebook.

French-Afghan journalist Mortaza Behboudi was released from Taliban custody on 18.10.23. He was arrested in January, shortly after entering the country, and accused of spying.

On 22.10.23 women staged a demonstration in Kabul to demand the release of a number of women’s rights campaigners from Taliban custody.

A woman and a man were subjected to a public flogging in Bamyán province after a Taliban court had found them guilty of adultery.

It is reported that several thousand Afghans are being deported from Pakistan to Afghanistan on a daily basis. All people who are illegally resident in Pakistan are to have left the country by 01.11.23 (cf. BN of 09.10. and 16.10.23). The Taliban are said to have set up camps at the border crossings. A number of aid organisations have repeatedly called on Pakistan not to deport these people, as many of them are waiting for an American visa and/or are subject to persecution by the Taliban.

30 October 2023

Expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan

The Pakistani foreign minister, Bugti, stated on 30.10.23 that the expulsion of refugees is to be carried out in two phases as of 01.11.23, following expiry of the announced deadline for voluntary departure (cf. BN of 09.10.23). In the first phase, refugees without a residence permit and travel documents are to be expelled, followed in the second phase by refugees who hold an ID card issued by the Pakistani government (Proof of Registration card) and who are registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It has further been reported that it is prohibited with immediate effect for refugees to rent accommodation in Pakistan. House owners are said to be urging refugees to leave their accommodation for fear of criminal prosecution. Refugees must not carry more than US\$ 180 on their person, otherwise their belongings will be confiscated. It was reported on 23.10.23 that the Pakistani government has already expelled 95,000 Afghans. Other media refer to the return of some 60,000

Afghans. It was further reported on 24.10.23 that Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency has installed a visa-checking system at Torkham border crossing in order to prevent Afghans from entering the country illegally. On 11.10.23 the Capital Development Authority Islamabad began demolishing a number of homes of illegally resident Afghan refugees (cf. BN of 16.10.23).

Security situation

The Afghanistan Freedom Front has reported that it killed four Taliban fighters and injured two in an attack on a Taliban base in Kapisa province on 22.10.23. It was reported on 26.10.23 that the Taliban had apprehended 20 suspected members of the Islamist organisation "Hizb ut-Tahir" in Ghazni province. This party was banned by the Taliban a few months after they assumed power.

According to reports on 26.10.23, a bomb attack on a boxing club occurred in Kabul's western district of Dasht-e Barchi, where ethnic Hazaras make up the majority of the population. The Taliban report that two people were killed and nine injured. The Etilaat Roz press medium puts the death toll at six, with eleven people injured. The Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Persecution

It was reported on 26.10.23 that the Taliban had shot dead four juveniles from Panjshir province at a checkpoint in the capital, Kabul. On the same day it was also reported that the head of the Pen Path Foundation, Matiullah Wisa, had been released from Taliban custody after 215 days (cf. BN of 03.04.23).

According to a new UNAMA report published on 23.10.23 which assesses the human rights situation from July to September 2023, the situation remains bad. The report states that more than 17,000 people are currently being held in Taliban prisons, which is pushing their capacities to breaking point. The number of prisoners reportedly rose substantially between July and September 2023 and treatment of the prisoners is not in compliance with minimum standards, which include unrestricted access to adequate food and healthcare. Inmates are allegedly routinely tortured. The report also documents human rights violations against the Hazara community in the Khas Uruzgan district (including killings, destruction of property and damaging of crops). Furthermore, members of the former government continue to be persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and killed, despite a general amnesty.

06 November 2023

Expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan

Expulsions of Afghans living in Pakistan continue (cf. BN of 23.10. and 30.10.23). A number of removal centres are reported to have been set up in Pakistan. Current reports show that people who hold refugee papers are also being forced to leave the country in some cases. There have been long queues at the two border crossings in Torkham and Chaman. The Taliban state that approx. 180,000 people returned from Pakistan to Afghanistan between 01.11. and 05.11.23. Aid organisations have reported "chaotic and desperate" states of affairs in the border regions, noting that returnees often had no financial means and nowhere to go in Afghanistan. The situation for people who are waiting in Pakistan for a visa from a third country is unclear. The USA has assured visa applicants that they would be excluded from expulsion. However, Pakistani authorities have rejected a list submitted by the USA specifying Afghan nationals who formerly worked for the US armed forces in Afghanistan and are designated for potential relocation to the USA. According to the German Federal Foreign Office, people who are in Pakistan for the federal admission programme are excluded from deportation.

Persecution

According to reports in the media on 30.10.23, eleven people who the Taliban accuse of having helped finance the armed struggle against them before they assumed power have been arrested in Ghazni province. The Taliban are apparently now demanding money from these people. A former soldier was arrested by the Taliban in Takhar province on 31.10.23.

Three young men were held by the Taliban for several hours and tortured in Panjshir province on 31.10.23. The background to this incident remains unclear. According to reports on the same day in the media, the Taliban have arrested 59 people from Panjshir province in the space of two weeks, both in the province itself and in Kabul. A number of these people were reportedly released after a short time, while the whereabouts of the others are unclear.

On 31.10.23 the Taliban arrested the author and film director Fereydoun Fakuri in Herat. No grounds for his arrest have been stated.

A women's rights activist reportedly hanged herself on 04.11.23 after she had been arrested at a checkpoint on 31.10.23 and released three days later.

Armed opposition

By their own accounts, the National Resistance Front killed three Taliban fighters in Parwan province on 30.10.23 and the Afghanistan Freedom Front also killed three Taliban fighters on the same day in an attack on a district administration centre in Baghlan province.

Opium growing

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reports that the opium harvest in Afghanistan in 2023 is 95 % smaller than in 2022. The Taliban banned opium growing in April 2022.

13 November 2023

Expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan

At a press conference on 08.11.23, Pakistan's interim prime minister Kakar stated that Pakistan would not be stopping the expulsion of illegally resident Afghan refugees to Afghanistan. He said that since the Taliban assumed power in 2021 there had been a dramatic rise in terrorist attacks in Pakistan, first and foremost by the Pakistani Taliban (TTP). He noted that the Afghan Taliban should decide whether they wanted to cooperate with the Pakistani government or with the TTP. According to information from the UN, approx. 280,000 refugees have already returned to Afghanistan, the majority of their own volition. According to information from Pakistan, by 01.11.23 approx. 7,400 illegally resident Afghans had been registered and deported to Afghanistan at the Landikotal holding camp in Pakistan, close to the Torkham border crossing. On the Afghan side there is a large refugee camp in Torkham which is being run by the Taliban. There is also the Chaman holding camp at the Spin Boldak border crossing point (cf. BN of 30.10. and 06.11.23).

Security situation: ISKP attacks on Hazaras

It was reported on 08.11.23 that there had again been a bomb attack by Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) in the west of Kabul (Dasht-e Barchi district). The attack on a bus carrying passengers killed eight people and injured 37. Ethnic Hazaras make up the majority of the population in the district concerned. The ISKP had previously carried out an attack in Dasht-e Barchi on 26.10.23, when a number of people were killed or injured at a boxing club (cf. BN of 30.10.23). On 13.10.23 there was an attack on a Shiite mosque in the city of Pul-e-Khumri in Baghlan province (cf. BN of 16.10.23). The current prevalence of reports indicates that the ISKP is stepping up attacks on Hazaras once again, after having broken with this strategy for a time and focusing instead on Taliban governors and foreign state visitors of the Taliban.

20 November 2023

Expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan; humanitarian situation

The expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan continues. The Taliban and international organisations have expressed concern about the situation of Afghans returning from Pakistan in view of the approaching winter and inadequate humanitarian provisions. On 17.11.23 Save the Children reported major outbreaks of infectious diseases among the returnees. This is attributed first and foremost to the lack of sanitary facilities and clean water.

The humanitarian situation also remains tense in Herat province. Many of the approx. 37,000 families affected by the earthquakes in October 2023 are living in improvised tent camps without adequate humanitarian provisions and with no possibility of preparing for the winter.

Persecution

The Taliban arrested women's rights activist Pari Azada in Kabul on 16.11.23.

On 17.11.23 the Taliban reportedly arrested two former soldiers after they had crossed the border from Iran. They allegedly fled to Iran after the Taliban assumed power, where they were subsequently arrested and have now been

deported to Afghanistan. According to Iranian authorities, 450,000 Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan from Iran in the past four months.

On 18.11.23 the Afghan Journalists Center published a report documenting severe censorship and 33 arrests of journalists between 21.03. and 17.11.23.

Armed opposition

By its own account, the Afghanistan Freedom Front killed a total of five Taliban fighters in Baghlan, Parwan and Kandahar provinces on 13.11., 14.11. and 16.11.23.

Taliban representative in Germany

On 16.11.2023 the head of the Taliban's supervisory authority for foods, Abdul Bari Omar, spoke to an audience of 70 in a mosque in Cologne. He had previously been at an event staged by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in the Netherlands. German authorities have expressed criticism of his admission into Germany and his public appearance in the country.

27 November 2023

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.

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.

04 December 2023

Expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan; humanitarian situation

The expulsion of Afghan nationals from Pakistan continues. 400,000 people have reportedly been deported from Pakistan to Afghanistan since October 2023. 90 % of these are said to have nowhere to return to. A survey reveals that 92 % have no access to clean water. Many additionally lack adequate food provisions.

On 27.11.23 the UN OCHA published a report alleging that the Taliban have obstructed humanitarian aid on repeated occasions. The mobility of aid organisations was restricted after the earthquakes in Herat province in

October 2023, for example. Restrictions imposed on women also often lead to projects being abandoned. The report further states that the staff of humanitarian organisations have been subjected to violence. The Taliban arrested 25 people in October 2023 alone.

Persecution

On 01.12.23 an unknown person shot dead six people in a district of the city of Herat in which Hazaras make up the majority of the population. Two of those killed were Shiite clerics.

It was reported on 28.11.23 that the Taliban had arrested 45 students at the University of Badakhshan. They are accused of being members of the transnational Islamist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir and of having collaborated with Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP).

It was reported on 27.11. and 01.12.23 respectively that the Taliban had arrested a former soldier in Panjshir and two former police officers in Parwan.

Government affairs

On 24.11.23 the Taliban dispatched their first ambassador to the People's Republic of China. At the same time, the Afghan embassy in India was closed. The embassy had been representing the toppled government up to this point in time. The two remaining consulate generals in India are reportedly linked to the Taliban.

On 03.12.23 the head of the central bank, who was appointed by the Taliban, announced that a completely Islamic banking system was to be introduced, under which banks will not be allowed to make any profits. Observers view the consequences of this step on the already severely weakened financial system with scepticism.

Security situation: Attacks by the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF)

By its own account, the AFF has killed four Taliban fighters in Kapisa province. The AFF has also claimed responsibility for an explosion in Kabul which reportedly killed two Taliban fighters on 27.11.23.

11 December 2023

Expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan

The expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan continues. According to reports in the media on 05.12.23, approx. 410,000 illegally resident Afghans have now returned to Afghanistan. Some 2,500 people crossed the border on 04.12.23, and approx. 2,000 more followed on 05.12.23. Approx. 1,800 people returned to Afghanistan from Iran on 05.12.23. The Pakistani army reported on 28.11.23 that on 27.11.23 a suicide attack on security forces in the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been carried out by an Afghan national belonging to a break-away faction of the Pakistani Taliban (the Hafiz Gul Bahadur group). The Pakistani government is justifying its action against Afghan refugees explicitly by reference to a need to combat a threat of terrorism from Afghan nationals. In view of the approaching winter, the WFP has issued a statement calling urgently for US\$ 26.3 million to support the expected arrival of a million returnees from Pakistan to Afghanistan.

Governance and persecution

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported at the beginning of December that the level of violence against Shiite Muslims had increased in Kabul, Baghlan and Herat in the previous month (cf. BN of 13.11. and 04.12.23).

It was reported on 06.12.23 that the Taliban secret service in Kunar province had arrested 25 pupils from Amra Khan High School in the city of Asadabad for showing the flag of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan during a graduation celebration in a park.

Between 26.10.22 and 26.10.23, the NGO Afghan Witness recorded 71 announcements by the Taliban of sharia punishments imposed on a total of 417 people in 22 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. More than half of these punishments - including the first execution - took place in December 2022. 220 men and 57 women were punished (the gender of the remaining individuals was not ascertainable). Most of the imposed punishments took the form of floggings (tazir punishments = discretionary punishments). Nine qisas punishments were also reported. These are a form of retributive justice, which often takes the form of a death sentence; two such judgements led to the execution of suspected murderers in December 2022 and June 2023, while in the other seven cases the convicted persons were pardoned. No hudud punishments (amputations, stonings) were reported in the period concerned.

Security situation

In Parwan province (Bagram district), the Taliban have issued an instruction to residents requiring them to provide information about their guests. On 25.11.23 the National Resistance Front fired missiles at the district government building from a residential building. According to reports in the media on 04.12.23, houses were searched in the city of Fayzabad (Badakhshan province) after missiles had been fired at a Taliban leader's residence.

18 December 2023

Expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan; humanitarian situation

The expulsion of Afghan nationals from Pakistan continues. According to reports in the media, approx. 455,000 illegally resident Afghans have now returned to Afghanistan. Nine international organisations have called for more humanitarian support for those returning, stating that 80 % of the returnees are women and children and that most of them have nowhere to return to.

In connection with an attack on a military post in the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on 12.12.23 in which many soldiers were killed or injured, the Pakistani government has stated that an Afghan national was involved in the attack and has called on the Afghan Taliban to condemn the attack, to initiate investigations and to hand over those responsible. Tehreek-e Jihad Pakistan, a group with close links to the Pakistani Taliban, had previously claimed responsibility for the attack. The Pakistani government is justifying its sustained action against Afghan refugees explicitly by reference to a need to combat a threat of terrorism from Afghan nationals (cf. BN of 11.12.23).

Security situation and governance

It has been reported in the media that the Taliban's defence ministry has disarmed and detained nine people from the entourage of Gulam Hussain, a local Tajik Taliban commander in Takhar province. No information is available as to the reasons for the arrests. Ethnic tensions persist within the Taliban, the majority of whom are Pashtuns. It was reported on 16.12.23 that the National Resistance Front (NRF) had attacked two Taliban bases in Parwan and Kapisa provinces. There has been no reporting as to any casualties.

Persecution

A new report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) highlights the arbitrary manner in which the Taliban deal with victims of sexualised and gender-based violence. The report points out, for example, that victims are placed in prisons when they have no direct male relatives who can accommodate them.

In Daykundi province, a journalist was sentenced to one year in prison on 13.12.23. He was accused of having criticised the government, cooperated with foreign actors and carried out spying.