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Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

21 January 2019

Egypt

Militants killed in military operation on the Sinai Peninsula

Egyptian security forces issued a statement on 20 January 2019 claiming they had killed 14 militants and seized a ton of explosives in an operation in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula. They said that their offensive involved clashes with Islamic militants in desert areas outside the city of el-Arish, adding that the extremists had intended to plant roadside bombs in areas between there and the cities of Rafah and Sheikh Zuweyid. The north of the Sinai Peninsula has been off limits for journalists, diplomats and other observers meaning that reports by the Egyptian military cannot be independently verified.

Ethiopia/Eritrea

Conflict escalates between the government and OLF

According to the former terrorist organisation Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Ethiopian Air Force killed seven civilians during airstrikes on the regional state of Oromia on 12 and 13 January 2019. The government refutes the allegations, but admits that it has deployed troops to the region. In a military offensive, the aim was to stabilise the situation again, a spokesperson for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said. She accused the OLF of committing criminal acts. Ethiopian radio station Fana reported that the troops had detained over 800 militant members of the OLF.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is celebrated internationally as a reformer and peacemaker because, after taking office in April 2018, he not only ended decades of war with neighbouring Eritrea, but also released thousands of political prisoners from detention and removed several groups, including the OLF, from the list of terrorist organisations. Numerous members living in exile subsequently returned to Ethiopia. Contrary to its original announcement, however, the OLF has so far refused to surrender its weapons and is demanding more autonomy for the Oromo. In recent months, there has been a series of violent clashes between Oromo and ethnic minorities, resulting in several deaths.

Afghanistan

Car bombing in Kabul

At least four persons were killed and more than 100 were wounded on 14 January 2019 when a car bomb exploded in front of a bar in Kabul in the 9th police compound known as “Green Village Camp”. Three members of the security forces and one civilian were amongst the dead. Among those wounded were two German police officers who were involved in a training mission for Afghan policemen. The following day, a civilian was killed in the same area by a magnetic bomb attached to his car. It is not yet known who carried out the attack.

Suicide bombings and attacks

Fighting was also reported in the following provinces: Badghis (western Afghanistan), Helmand Kandahar, Uruzgan, Zabul (southern Afghanistan), Balkh, Jawzjan, Faryab (northern Afghanistan), Parwan, Kapisa, Wardak, Logar (central Afghanistan), Ghazni, Paktika (south-eastern Afghanistan), Nangarhar (eastern Afghanistan), Baghlan and Kunduz (north-eastern Afghanistan).

According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), the war in Afghanistan in 2018 was the most lethal in the world. Although the number of security incidents is lower, ACLED registered almost as many casualties as Syria and Yemen combined (without making any distinction between civilians and militants).

Albania

Drug lord arrested

One of Albania's most wanted drug traffickers surrendered to police on Tuesday after almost three years on the run on charges of smuggling narcotics by neighbouring Greece.

Klement Balili, one of the most important masterminds behind the drug trade from Albania to western and northern Europe, voluntarily turned himself in to the authorities after being on the run for two years. The "Pablo Escobar of the Balkans" is also said to have close ties with leading politicians; he himself was a civil servant in the state administration for many years. For years, the drug barons in Albania were considered to be untouchable. The US Embassy in Tirana and the European Union had doubts about the authorities' determination to break up the drug gangs.

The successful fight against drug-related crime and organised crime are key criteria for opening accession negotiations. The country is now making good progress in the fight against organised crime. 27 suspected drug dealers were arrested as recently as October 2018 (cf. Briefing Notes of 29 October 2018).

Armenia

Nikol Pashinyan appointed Prime Minister

Just over one month after parliamentary elections that had been brought forward were held in Armenia, the former opposition politician Nikol Pashinyan was appointed new Prime Minister on 14 January 2019. Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan signed the decree. He did so on the recommendation of the majority of MPs. In the spring of 2018, Pashinyan had led weeks of street protests against corruption and nepotism in Armenia, forcing the then government to resign. On 8 May 2018, he was appointed interim Prime Minister. He paved the way for snap elections by tendering his resignation in October 2018. He won the election in a landslide victory on 9 December 2018 receiving 70 percent of the votes with his My Step Alliance which gave him a two-thirds majority in the Armenian parliament.

Burundi

New capital

On 16 January 2019, parliament voted to transfer the country's capital to Gitega. Gitega is the capital of Gitega province in the centre of the country. The transfer is expected to take three years to complete and will begin in 2019 with the relocation of the Senate and five ministries. The current capital is Bujumbura which is located in the west of the country on the northern shore of Lake Tanganyika.

China

Human Right Prize awarded to Yu Wensheng

On 14 January 2019, the French and German ambassadors to Beijing granted the Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law for 2018 to the detained Chinese lawyer Yu Wensheng. As Yu is in prison, his wife picked up the prize on his behalf. Yu had been arrested in January 2018. Prior to his arrest, Mr Yu had, inter alia, circulated an open letter calling for five reforms to China's Constitution.

Côte d'Ivoire

Laurent Gbagbo acquitted

Seven years after his arrest, the International Criminal Court (ICC) acquitted the former President and former Minister Charles Blé Goudé on 15 January 2015, ruling they had no case to answer. The court suspended the release in view of the appeal lodged by the public prosecutor's office and the risk of the accused absconding. Gbagbo was the first head of state to appear in person before the ICC in the Hague. He and his former minister were accused of ordering murder and gang-rape related to post-election violence in 2010. The acquittal of the ICC has sparked renewed unrest in the West African country.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Constitutional Court declares Tshisekedi winner of presidential election

In the early morning of 20 January 2019, the Constitutional Court dismissed as unfounded two complaints filed by opposition politician Martin Fayulu, the runner-up in the presidential election held on 30 December 2018, against the provisional election result published by the Independent National Electoral Commission CENI (cf. Briefing Notes of 14 January 2019). It thus confirmed Felix Tshisekedi, the chairperson of Congo's largest opposition party UDPS (Union for Democracy and Social Progress), as the winner of the election. The official results are controversial. The Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (CENCO), which maintained the country's largest independent network with around 40,000 election observers, has now published its own results. They indicate that Fayulu received 57 percent of the votes, Tshisekedi about 20 percent and Shadary, the government candidate, about 18 percent. Fayulu declared himself the only legitimate president shortly after the Constitutional Court's decision. He urged the international community not to recognise Tshisekedi as President and called upon the population to demonstrate peacefully against the court's decision. According to the UN Human Rights Office, 34 persons were killed, 59 were wounded and 241 were arbitrarily arrested in riots which erupted in connection with the election last week.

Almost 900 persons killed in ethnic clashes in the city of Yumbi

On 16 January 2019, the UN Human Rights Office reported that violent clashes had erupted between Banunu and Batende ethnic groups in four villages of the Yumbi territory (western province of May Ndombe) between 16 and 18 December 2018. According to credible sources, at least 890 persons were killed and more than 450 buildings were set on fire or pillaged. Around 16,000 persons sought refuge by crossing the Congo River into the Republic of Congo. The unrest was triggered by the fact that both ethnic groups failed to agree on a place of burial for a tribal chief. As a result of the riots, the elections held on 30 December 2018 in the Congo had been postponed in the Yumbi area.

FYR Macedonia

Last remaining hurdle in the name dispute

After the Parliament in Skopje voted on 11 January 2019 to rename the country "Republic of North Macedonia", the 2018 agreement stipulates that the Greek Parliament must also ratify this before the name change can take effect.

After the success of the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in the vote of confidence on 15 January 2019 (cf. Briefing Notes of 14 January 2019), many observers assume that the name dispute will end soon even though there is no secure majority for it in parliament. Over the weekend, tens of thousands of people took to the streets to protest against the name compromise brokered. Surveys show that more than 70 percent of Greeks are against it. The vote in parliament is still expected to take place in the last week of January.

Ghana

Journalist assassinated

The undercover journalist Ahmed Hussein-Suale was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in the streets of Ghana's capital Accra on 16 January 2019. In 2018 he had been involved in the uncovering of a corruption

affair in the Ghanaian Football Association. He worked with the well-known journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas, who uncovered corruption in the judiciary in 2015.

India

Over 1.000 Rohingya move on to Bangladesh

So far this year more than 1,000 of the estimated 40,000 Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar to India have moved on to Bangladesh because of fears of deportation. Several hundred Rohingya are being detained in the northern states awaiting repatriation to Myanmar.

Iraq

Security situation

Three ISIS militants were killed in Kirkuk province in an airstrike carried out by Iraqi fighter planes on 16 January 2019.

According to a press release issued on 17 January 2019, residents from the surrounding area of the town of Khanaqin, Diyala Province, have left their villages and moved to safer cities as the number of attacks by ISIS fighters has increased. In the past 16 days, ISIS militants have carried out ten attacks against Iraqi security forces and residents in the Khanaqin and Jalawla areas.

Mass grave discovered

Security forces have discovered a mass grave near Camp Al-Kask, west of Mosul, containing the bodies of 40 persons killed by ISIS fighters during their retreat.

KDP politician assassinated

On 15 January 2019, Jabbar Rashid, the head of a local KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) office in Musallad district in Kirkuk, was assassinated in the Runaki district in the centre of Kirkuk. The perpetrators managed to flee.

Protests in Basra

On 18 January 2019, protestors set fire to a police station near the governor's office in Basra and threw stones at police officers. One officer was injured. They demanded the release of the protestors who had been arrested at the beginning of the week as well as better services and jobs. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowds.

Iran

Child marriage

According to a new study conducted by social scientist Kamil Ahmadi, around 17 percent of brides in Iran are younger than 18. According to the study, there were 95,000 divorces involving girls under the age of 19 between 2012 and 2016. In addition, there are currently 14,000 underage widows. Although Iran signed the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, Islamic law took precedence. According to Section 1014 of the Iranian Civil Code, which is based on Islamic law, parents are entitled to marry off their daughters from the age of 13 and their sons from the age of 15. Parents of girls under the age of 13 can have their daughters' maturity for marriage confirmed by a judge. In the past 12 years, more than 400,000 girls under the age of 15 have been married in Iran. The parliamentary commission for legal and judicial issues had recently rejected a bill to raise the legal age of marriage to 16 for girls and 18 for boys.

Intelligence activities in Germany

According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Iran is actively involved in gathering intelligence on its own opposition members and infiltrating their organisations in Germany. This also affects

sensitive information from business, politics and the military. One of the main carriers of intelligence activities is the civilian domestic and foreign intelligence service of the Ministry of Information and Security (MOIS), in Persian: “Vezerat-e Ettela'at va Amniat-e Keshvar” (VEVAK).

Worker activist rearrested

The student and worker activist Sepideh Ghailan was arrested once again on 20 January 2019 together with her brother Mehdi Ghailan at their parents' home in the southwest Iranian town of Ahwaz. According to her lawyer, the security guards did not produce a warrant for her arrest and used force during the arrest. This is the second time in three months that Sepideh Ghailan has been arrested. Together with a colleague, Ghailan was arrested in November 2018 during the week-long strikes at the Haft-e Tapeh sugar cane factory in Khuzestan, southern Iran in which workers pressed for payment of wage arrears. She was released on bail just four weeks later. During her detention, she allegedly suffered psychological and physical torture at the hands of officials of the Ministry of Information. The strike was held to demand payment of longstanding wage arrears.

Yemen

UN team comes under fire in Hodeidah

A UN team tasked with overseeing the ceasefire between the government troops and the Houthi rebels in the city of Hodeidah came under fire on 17 January 2019. None of the team were injured. Both conflicting parties blame each other. The ceasefire in Hodeidah agreed in Sweden was, however, largely respected, even though occasional clashes took place.

Women illegally arrested and tortured by Houthi rebels

According to press reports, Houthi rebels have illegally arrested dozens of women. The women were allegedly tortured and their families blackmailed. Some women were accused of working as prostitutes or cooperating with the coalition led by Saudi Arabia. The Houthi rebels have rejected the accusations.

Clashes between Al-Qaeda and pro-government troops

Supporters of the group Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) allegedly occupied the city of Mahfad in the district of Mahfad (Abyan Gouvernement) and hoisted their flag on government buildings on 15 January 2019. The United Arab Emirates-backed Al Hizam Security Forces, fighting for the Yemeni government, drove the group out of the city and back into the mountains the same day. Al Hizam reportedly killed eight AQAP fighters on 16 January 2019.

Kenya

21 killed in hotel siege

At least 21 people were killed in an attack on a luxury hotel in the capital Nairobi on 15 January 2019, including the approximately five attackers. Following an attack on cars parked in front of the hotel, one of the attackers self-detonated a suicide vest in the foyer of the hotel; several heavily armed people barricaded themselves inside the building complex, which also includes offices, shops and restaurants, until the morning of the following day. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Columbia

Car bomb claims lives

On 17 January 2019, a suicide bomber detonated a car bomb on the premises of a police academy in the capital Bogotá. The suicide bomber and at least 20 persons attending a ceremony at the facility were killed. The perpetrator was identified as an explosives expert of the rebel organisation Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which failed to comment on the attack initially. Colombia's President Iván Duque Márquez suspended the peace talks with the rebels.

Libya

Renewed fighting in Tripoli

From the 16 to 18 January 2019, gunfire erupted once again in the south of Tripoli. The 7th Brigade from Tarhouna, which had brought parts of Tripoli under its control in September, was driven out of the city. On 20 January 2019, witnesses in different parts of the city confirmed that the situation had calmed down. So far, reports that 16 persons were killed and about 50 were wounded have been confirmed. The photojournalist Mohamed bin Khalifa, who had reported from and about Tripoli for the past three years, was among the dead.

The 7th Brigade seems to have withdrawn completely in the direction of Tarhouna and is taking up defensive positions there.

Khalifa Haftar and the south

On 15 January 2019, the self-styled army of Khalifa Haftar (LNA) declared that they had launched a military offensive in Sabha province to secure oil and gas resources and combat extremists. Observers are already speculating that the LNA could also target the al-Sharara oil field which is 250 km away. Libya's largest oil field has been closed since December 2018 due to a strike. Several important militias from Sabha and Murziq have already publicly refused to join Haftar. It is not possible to realistically assess Haftar's actual military capabilities in southern Libya.

Mali

UN bluehelmets killed

According to media reports, the base of the UN bluehelmet mission MINUSMA in Aguelhok (Kidal region) was attacked by numerous armed attackers on 20 January 2019. At least eight peacekeepers from Chad were reportedly killed and another 25 were wounded. JNIM (Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin), a jihadist group allied with Al-Qaeda, declared its support for the attack in response to the resumption of diplomatic relations between Chad's President Idriss Déby and Israel. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has condemned the attack.

Terrorist suspects killed in airstrike

About 15 terrorist suspects were killed during an airstrike carried out by French troops on 10 January 2019. The terrorists were suspected of having planned an attack in the Dialoubé region.

Montenegro

Controversial conviction of a journalist

The well-known investigative journalist Jovo Martinovic was sentenced to one and a half years in prison on drug trafficking charges on 15 January 2019. In actual fact, he had been investigating the drug mafia. The sentence was passed after a trial that created quite a stir because of its inconsistencies and procedures. Martinovic was given access to the file only after six months in custody. The verdict has come under fire internationally. According to Reporters Without Borders, evidence of the defendant's innocence was ignored. The European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) also condemned the conviction.

Nigeria

Boko Haram briefly captures the village of Rann

In the evening hours of 14 January 2019, Boko Haram managed to capture the town of Rann (Borno State, administrative headquarters of the Kala Balge Local Government Area) in the Lake Chad region following several hours of fighting with security forces. The Army managed to recapture Rann the following day. In a

video published on 17 January 2019, Boko Haram, under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, claimed responsibility for the attack.

Russian Federation

Blogger detained

On 12 January 2019, the blogger Viktor Toroptyev was arrested by police in the Siberian city of Amursk for a road traffic offence. The blogger, who was released the following day, was arrested again on 14 January 2019 and sentenced to ten days imprisonment by the city court. According to Toroptyev, his arrest was illegal and he was arrested for sharing a video on Youtube. The video shows law enforcement officers attending the funeral of a local gang leader in Amursk on 8 January 2019. The local authorities have refuted the allegations. The Russian authorities failed to comment on the arrest.

Saudi Arabia

Accusation levelled by SOS Children's Villages: Saudi-Arabia is using child soldiers in Yemen

For more than three years, an Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia has been supporting the Sunni government in Yemen in its fight against the Shi'ite Houthi rebels. The SOS Children's Villages International accuse Saudi Arabia of using Sudanese child soldiers in the war. More than 2,000 fighters from Sudan have already died there, including many children. According to the helpers, the children are being recruited by the paramilitary Sudanese group RSF (Rapid Sudanese Forces) on behalf of the government and are subsequently being deployed by Saudi Arabia in Yemen.

Serbia

Protests continue

On 19 January 2019, for the seventh time in a row, thousands of people took to the streets to protest against the government. In addition to smear campaigns against members of the opposition, they accuse Aleksandar Vucic of controlling the media, nepotism and political control of the judiciary.

On 16 January 2019 - one year after the murder of Kosovo Serb opposition politician Oliver Ivanovic - thousands took part in a silent march in Belgrade. The circumstances surrounding Ivanovic's death are still unclear. The opposition suspects his assassination was politically motivated. Ivanovic was a high-ranking representative of Kosovo's Serb minority. He was considered to be a moderate politician and an important mediator between Serbs and Kosovars. He was one of the few Serbian politicians to publicly criticize Serbia's policies (cf. Briefing Notes of 22 January 2018).

Zimbabwe

Unrest owing to hike in the price of fuel

After President Emmerson Mnangagwa announced on 12 January 2019 that petrol prices would go up by 150 percent on 13 January 2019, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) called for a three-day general strike on 14 January 2019 after which violent clashes erupted between demonstrators and the security forces in Harare and Bulawayo, lasting three days. According to official figures, three persons were killed, while local human rights groups reported that at least twelve persons were killed by security forces. The Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights stated that 68 persons had been treated for gunshot wounds. More than 600 people were arrested during protests and, in some cases, during house searches. Among them were several members of the opposition party MDC (Movement for Democratic Change). President George Gumbo has accused the party of being responsible for the violence during the demonstrations. On the morning of 16 January 2019, the pastor and activist Evan Mawarire, who had urged the population on social media to take part in the strike, was arrested. He was tried in Harare on 18 January 2019. In 2016, he had organised the ThisFlag campaign, which led to nationwide protests against the then government under former President Robert Mugabe.

Somalia

Combat operations

According to sources at a Somali radio station, 85 Al-Shabaab fighters were killed in an operation carried out by US-based Somali special forces in several towns outside the city of Janaale (Lower Shabelle region), including five foreign nationals, on 13 January 2019. The foreign fighters came from Tanzania, Egypt, Mauritania, Yemen and Syria.

Al-Shabaab reportedly killed 57 troops on 18 January 2019 in an attack carried out against an Ethiopian military convoy near the town of Burhakaba (Bay region). The Ethiopian military leadership has not commented on the number of casualties.

The US troops announced that 52 extremists had been killed in an airstrike against Al-Shabaab near Jilib (Middle Juba region) on 19 January 2019. The operation is said to have taken place in the wake of Al-Shabaab attacks on two Somali army bases where, according to Al-Shabaab, at least 41 Somali troops were killed.

Sudan

Anti-government protests continue

In the course of the demonstrations against the government of President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, which have been going on for weeks, human rights organisations say several dozens of protesters have been killed and several hundred arrested by security forces.

The background to the protests is the country's poor economic situation. The abolition of subsidies for wheat at the beginning of 2018 caused the price of bread to double. This is being attributed to massive losses in purchasing power and an inflation rate of around 70 percent caused by a multiple devaluation of the currency that had already taken place. There is also a shortage of food and fuel.

The reasons for the economic decline are the secession of South Sudan in 2011 and the associated loss of oil resources, mismanagement, corruption and excessive expenditure on the security apparatus. Similar protests had already taken place in 2013 and 2016.

Syria

Israeli airstrikes

In the early hours of 21 January 2019, the Israeli military claims it carried out airstrikes on Iranian units in Syria. It attacked targets of the Quds brigades and the Syrian army, including several arsenals and a facility at Damascus International Airport as well as an Iranian intelligence site and an Iranian training camp. The Quds Brigades are the elite unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, who are deployed mainly abroad. As a result, Israeli missile defence systems intercepted a missile above the Golan Heights. Israel has warned the Syrian army not to carry out any further attacks on Israeli territory.

ISIS attack in northern Syria

Several persons were killed in a suicide bombing carried out at a restaurant in the Syrian city of Manbij on 16 January 2019. The pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights claims nine civilians were killed as well as five members of local and foreign security forces, including several US troops. ISIS has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Tajikistan

Journalist sentenced in absentia to eight months in prison

On 11 January 2019, the independent journalist Hairullo Mirsaidov was sentenced by a court in the city of Khujand in absentia to eight months imprisonment for violating a court order and for illegally leaving the country. According to his lawyer, the journalist had left Tajikistan to undergo medical treatment. However, according to the Tajik authorities, Mirsaidov left without their permission. The journalist, who was arrested

in December 2018 for embezzlement, false testimony and inciting ethnic and religious hatred, was released from prison in August 2018. A Tajik court had converted the 12-year prison sentence into a fine and community service. Mirsaidov himself rejected the accusations and claims they were politically motivated. (cf. Briefing Notes of 16 July and 27 August 2018).

Togo

Activist sentenced

On 16 January 2019, a court in the capital Lomé sentenced the head of the movement “En Aucun Cas” (Under No Circumstances), Folly Satchivi to three years in prison, one of which was suspended. He had been in held custody since August 2018 because he had planned a press conference to mediate with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Togo’s domestic political crisis.

Turkey

Human rights award winner receives prison sentence

The well-known Turkish lawyer and human rights award winner Murat Arslan was sentenced to ten years in prison by a court in Ankara on 18 January 2019. The former judge and assistant judge at Turkey’s highest judicial body, the Constitutional Court, is charged with membership of the Gülen movement. He also headed the Association of Judges and Prosecutors, which was dissolved after the attempted coup.

Arslan was arrested a few months after the coup attempt in 2016 and has been in custody since then. In October 2017, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe awarded him the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize in absentia. His team of lawyers withdrew from the trial on 18 January 2019 in protest. The verdict was handed down without appointing a new defence lawyer.

Demonstration for Leyla Güven

According to media reports, a crowd of thousands rallied in Diyarbakir on 19 January 2019 in support of the MP Leyla Güven. They expressed their solidarity with the imprisoned parliamentarian and waved flags of their pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party ((HDP). According to the party, Güven’s state of health is now life-threatening.

Güven was arrested in January 2018 following criticism of the Turkish offensive in Syria’s Afrin. On 8 November 2018 she started an unlimited hunger strike to demonstrate against the prison conditions of the leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Abdullah Ocalan. Since then, more than 100 prisoners have joined the protest. The Turkish government accuses the HDP of being the political branch of the PKK, many MPs are in detention.

Raids against Gülen supporters

On 15 January 2019, the Turkish public prosecutor’s office once again carried out extensive raids against suspected Gülen supporters. According to press reports, over 220 arrest warrants were issued in Ankara, Konya, Kocaeli and other provinces against suspected Gülen supporters. The majority of the suspects are alleged to be active soldiers who are accused of having made calls during the coup attempt from public telephones in order to contact so-called imams of the Gülen movement.

Tunisia

Strike for better pay

On 17 January 2019, hundreds of thousands of civil servants responded to the strike call by the Union General du Travail (UGTT) by taking to the streets. The strike mainly affected airports, railway stations, ports, schools, hospitals and state media. The approximately 670,000 public sector workers are on strike against wage cuts, a government austerity measure in the public sector, following a deal struck with the International Monetary Fund in December 2016. The UGTT also calls for the fight against high unemployment and corruption in the country. Since 25 December 2018, people in Tunisia have been taking to the streets after a journalist self-immolated on 24 December 2018 in protest against economic hardship.

Belarus

Man sentenced to death

A district court sentenced Alyaksandr Asipovich to death on 9 January 2019 for murdering two women in Baruysk.

Belarus is the only European country to impose the death penalty and execute prisoners. The media and human rights organisations reported that four executions were carried out in 2018 (cf. Briefing Notes of 3 December 2018).

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Briefing- Notes
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