

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

<b>Bilagsnr.:</b>	<b>1349</b>
Land:	Irak
Kilde:	BAMF
Titel:	Briefing Notes
Udgivet:	23. november 2020
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	13. januar 2021



# Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

23. November 2020

## Afghanistan

### **COVID-19 pandemic**

On 19 November 2020, Afghanistan's health ministry confirmed that the country is in a second wave of the corona pandemic, as has been indicated in recent weeks. In response, the Afghan government ordered that wedding halls and other public places have to be closed from the end of December 2020.

Despite the increasing number of infections, health care facilities and people working there continue to be the victims of attacks. Since the beginning of the pandemic, there have been direct attacks on hospitals, abductions of health workers, intimidation, harassment and obstruction as well as looting of medical supplies. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports 67 such incidents in 17 provinces in the first ten months of 2020. In this period, a total of 38 health facilities in four provinces had to be closed (e.g. in Helmand). A report published by World Vision says that children, especially those from poor backgrounds, are particularly affected by the social and economic consequences of the pandemic. The report investigates child mortality, malnutrition, forced marriages, sexual abuse, child labour and other forms of violence and exploitation.

### **Fighting, attacks, civilian victims**

The New York Times reports that at least 186 pro-government forces and 163 civilians have so far died in November 2020 in military conflicts in several provinces (as of 19 November 2020).

Afghanistan's interior ministry states that since the signing of the agreement with the US in February 2020, the Taliban have attacked at least 50 district centres in 19 provinces, with most attacks occurring in the last two months after the government started negotiations with the Taliban in Qatar. According to the ministry, 1,210 civilians have been killed and another 2,500 injured. The provinces most affected were Uruzgan, Kandahar, Helmand, Farah, Nimroz, Herat, Badghis, Faryab, Jawzjan, Sar-e-Pul, Balkh, Samangan, Baghlan, Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan.

On 21 November 2020, at least 23 missiles hit the centre and various other parts of Kabul, killing at least ten people and injuring another 51. No one has yet claimed responsibility for the rocket attacks. The Taliban have denied being responsible for the assault. The next day, four people were injured in a taxi attack with a magnetic bomb; and an army vehicle hit a booby trap. Nobody has taken responsibility for these attacks either.

### **Reduction of US troops**

The agreement with the Taliban requires all US troops, allies and civilian security services to leave the country by the end of April 2021. The US government has now announced that it will reduce the number of its soldiers from 4,500 to 2,500 by mid-January 2021. Observers fear that this may weaken the Afghan government's position in the peace negotiations and the Taliban might gain more territorial influence (see above). Several US analysts also warn that the balance of power in the fight would shift towards the Taliban.

## **Albania**

### **Suspension of deportation of a Turkish national refused**

The request of an alleged Turkish Gülen supporter to suspend his deportation to his country of origin was rejected by the Administrative Court. His application for asylum had been rejected by the second instance, the National Asylum and Refugee Committee (see BN of 21 September 2020). Now, there is nothing to stand in the way of his deportation.

## **Armenia / Azerbaijan**

### **Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire agreement is being respected**

The ceasefire agreement negotiated on 9 November 2020 between Armenia and Azerbaijan for Nagorno-Karabakh has been respected so far. In the meantime, around 2,000 Russian soldiers have arrived to monitor compliance with the agreement and to guarantee the implementation of further agreements. The Russian soldiers give the people of Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, a certain sense of security, even if hardly anyone expects lasting peace. The Russian soldiers have positioned themselves almost two kilometres from the centre of Stepanakert. Here, a road leads up the mountain towards the city of Shusha, which has been conquered by Azerbaijan. Anyone wishing to continue along the road has to pass through several Russian checkpoints. Russia wants to secure the so-called Lachin Corridor, which will be the only road connection from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, ensuring the supply and thus the survival of the people in Nagorno-Karabakh. In the meantime, coaches with returnees are arriving in Stepanakert. It remains to be seen how many of the approximately 100,000 people who fled to Armenia will return to Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan, in turn, has taken over the first areas previously controlled by Armenia, including the regions of Agdam and Kalbajar.

## **Belarus**

### **Continuing protests against President Lukashenko**

On 22 November 2020, protest rallies against President Alexander Lukashenko took place on the 15th Sunday in succession. Thousands of people gathered in Minsk and other cities. Human rights groups report that at least 350 protesters were arrested. On each of the previous two Sundays there had been around 1,000 protesters. This time, in Minsk people first gathered at various locations in the city before joining in protest marches. On 20 November 2020, thousands of people in Minsk attended the funeral service for opposition leader Roman Bondarenko who died in unknown circumstances. The opposition believes that security forces caused his death.

## **Brazil**

### **COVID-19 pandemic in indigenous areas out of control**

In Brazil's largest protected area for indigenous communities, the COVID 19 pandemic has got completely out of control, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and indigenous representatives say. A study presented on 19 November 2020 by the non-governmental organisation Rede Pró-Yanomami e Ye'kwana reveals that some 10,000 of the approx. 27,000 indigenous people in the region may already have come into contact with the virus. They blame mainly illegal goldminers for bringing the corona virus into their territories. With over six million confirmed corona infections and almost 170,000 deaths related to COVID-19, Brazil is one of the countries most affected by the pandemic in the world.

## **Burkina Faso**

### **Peaceful elections overshadowed by terrorist threat**

On 22 November 2020, presidential and parliamentary elections were held in the country, although many municipalities were unable to participate from the outset due to the threat of Islamist terrorists (see BN of 16

November 2020). A total of 6.5 million citizens were entitled to vote. Those affected by internal displacement (about 1 million people) were also allowed to cast their ballot. However, it was suspected in advance that this could fail for many of them because they were unable to prove their identity. In addition, Burkina Faso citizens from abroad were allowed to participate for the first time. However, out of 1.7 million potential voters in Côte d'Ivoire alone, only about 6,000 are said to have made use of the possibility to register on electoral lists.

The results of the elections are expected in the coming days. If none of the 13 candidates in the presidential election, among them a woman, passes the 50 percent hurdle at the first attempt, there will be a run-off vote. According to media reports, the elections were peaceful. However, the head of the election commission reported early closures of polling stations in the east of the country where Jihadists had threatened to cut off the fingers of those who dipped a finger in ink, which is a sign of participation in the elections.

## **Burundi**

### **Office of the UN Special Envoy must close**

The Burundian Government rejects the United Nations (UN) proposal to extend the Special Envoy's stay in the country until the end of 2021. The office of Ely Dieng is therefore to be closed on 31 December 2020, the foreign ministry officially informed the UN on 20 November 2020, stating that Burundi's internal political crisis was resolved when the new president Evariste Ndayishimiye took office in June 2020. Like his predecessor Pierre Nkurunziza, Ndayishimiye belongs to the ruling party Conseil National de Défense de la Démocratie - Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD-FDD).

Nkurunziza had triggered a violent domestic political conflict in 2015 when he was seeking a third term in office, in violation of the constitution, as his critics said. In order to support a settlement of the conflict, the position of a UN Special Envoy to Burundi was created in 2016. Although it would have been legal after a constitutional amendment, Nkurunziza did not run for a fourth term in May 2020. He died shortly after the June 2020 elections. In mid-November 2020, the UN Special Envoy reported some progress, but also persistent problems with the potentially violent pro-government militia Imbonerakure. A UN Human Rights Council commission had identified persistent human rights violations in a September 2020 report.

## **China**

### **Hong Kong: trial of activists, arrests**

The trial of activists Joshua Wong, Agnes Chow and Ivan Lam began on 23 November 2020. They are accused of taking part in an unauthorised demonstration in front of a police station in June 2019 and of having invited others to participate. All three pleaded guilty. The court decided that they will be remanded in custody pending the delivery of a verdict on 2 December 2020. If convicted, the activists face up to five years in prison.

On 18 November 2020, police arrested three former members of the democratic camp, but released them on bail the same day. Eddie Chu, Ray Chan and Ted Hui are accused of disrupting two sessions of parliament in May and June 2020 by distributing foul-smelling substances in the chamber. They have already been ordered to pay fines for this in June 2020. The sessions in question debated a law making it a criminal offence to denigrate the Chinese national anthem. The law has since entered into force (see BN of 8 June 2020). Eddie Chu and Ray Chan resigned their mandates in September 2020, Ted Hui on 11 November 2020 (see BN of 16 November 2020).

On 22 November 2020, District Councillors Henry Wong, Timothy Lee and one other individual were arrested. They are accused, inter alia, of irregularities in the financing of their election campaign for the general election planned for this year and postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 21 November 2020, radio presenter Wan Yiu-sing, his wife and a personal assistant were arrested on suspicion of violating the security law. In February 2020, Wan Yiu-sing had called for monetary donations for supporters of the protest movement who had gone to Taiwan to study. In addition, the three detainees are suspected of money laundering.

Activists report that about 10,000 people have been arrested in recent months, mostly temporarily, in connection with the protests of the democracy movement. Legal proceedings have been initiated against almost 1,700 people.

## **Egypt**

### **Three human rights defenders arrested**

During the week of 16-22 November 2020, the security authorities detained three staff members of the local human rights organisation Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) in Cairo. They are accused of membership in a terrorist organisation and of spreading false news, international human rights organisations report. In early November 2020, EIPR staff had met with numerous Western diplomats and exchanged views on the human rights situation in Egypt.

## **Ethiopia**

### **Abiy Ahmed announces final offensive in Tigray**

In the conflict with the regional government in Tigray, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has announced a final military offensive and the conquest of several cities (Adigrat, Adwa, Alamata, Axum, Edaga Hamus, Shire). Other important areas were also under military control, he stated, with the next target being Mekelle, the capital of the regional state. The ruling Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) was accused of destroying bridges to stop the advance of the Ethiopian army. However, this would not prevent the armed forces from taking control of the entire regional state in the near future, Abiy Ahmed said. On 22 November, he set the TPLF a 72-hour deadline for surrender.

However, experts point out that the TPLF has about 250,000 paramilitaries and militiamen as well as heavy military equipment at its disposal, and that the mountainous topography of Tigray impedes rapid troop movements. The United Nations (UN) also warns of a long war. TPLF leader Debretsion Gebremichael has confirmed that his soldiers lost control of the cities in the south and west of Tigray, but that this was only temporary, he said, and "the people of Tigray will never bow to the invaders". A recruitment campaign by the TPLF is reported.

After the rocket attacks on the Eritrean capital Asmara (see BN of 16 November 2020), there appears to be a persisting danger of the conflict spreading to neighbouring countries, especially to Eritrea. There have been reports of Ethiopian troops entering Tigray from Eritrean territory and of new troop movements towards the Ethiopian border. There are also rumours that conscription is being pushed forward in Eritrea. Furthermore, it is reported that drones stationed at the United Arab Emirates (UAE) air base in Assab, Eritrea, are being used in Tigray. However, access to independent information remains severely restricted.

### **Refugee crisis in Sudan feared**

According to UN estimates, over 30,000 people have fled to neighbouring Sudan because of the armed conflicts. Up to 200,000 people can be expected if the conflict is not ended. Currently, 4,000 to 5,000 refugees cross the border every day. They report of militias killing civilians with machetes, of heavy bombardments from the air and of dead bodies lying in the streets.

### **Ethiopia rejects mediators in conflict over Tigray**

Ethiopia has rejected an offer of mediation by the African Union (AU). The AU had appointed three former African presidents as special envoys tasked to seek a ceasefire in the conflict in Tigray. The government underlined its intention to have the TPLF leadership arrested before talks can take place.

### **Tigrayan peacekeepers disarmed in Somalia**

Apparently, between 200 and 300 Ethiopian peacekeepers of Tigrayan origin stationed in Somalia have been disarmed. Ethiopia provides 4,000 of the 17,000 troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), of which 3,000 soldiers are reported to have been recalled for deployment in Tigray. Hence, observers fear destabilisation in Somalia as well.

### **Ethiopia accuses WHO director Tedros of supporting the TPLF**

Ethiopia's army chief General Birhanu Jula has accused the Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, of supporting the rebels in Tigray by supplying them with weapons and urging other states to condemn the war. No evidence has been presented to support these allegations. Tedros, an ethnic Tigrayan, has been head of the WHO since 2017 and was previously Ethiopia's health and foreign affairs minister.

### **Ethnic violence in the regional state of Benishangul-Gumuz**

On 15 November 2020, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reported an attack on a bus in the Dibate district which claimed the lives of at least 34 civilians. Local media blame TPLF militias for the incident.

Recently, ethnic violence has increased significantly, especially in the Metekel zone. In September 2020 alone, over 100 deaths were reported. Amhars in particular see themselves as victims of ethnic violence and displacement. The central government is sending military units to restore order, as it regularly does in such escalating situations. It is not clear who is responsible for the violence. While Amhars see themselves as victims of Gumuz militias, the central government considers the TPLF and OLF as the main actors.

## **Guatemala**

### **Parliament set on fire during protests**

On 21 November 2020, demonstrators set fire to parts of the parliament building in the historic centre of the capital. The protest was directed against lawmakers who had approved a record budget for 2021 in a fast-track procedure. The focus of criticism is the planned massive recourse to new financial debt and cuts in health and education. Hundreds of demonstrators marched in front of the parliament to demand the resignation of head of state Alejandro Giammattei. The parliament is dominated by Giammattei's party and its allies. The fire brigade was able to bring the fire under control. On the fringes of the protests, demonstrators hurled stones at police forces, who in turn fired tear gas into the crowd. According to media reports, about 50 people were taken to hospital. Police reported over 30 arrests. There were also demonstrations and riots in other major cities on the same day. The following day, protests were largely peaceful. Media report that during the night of 23 November 2020, parliamentary representatives announced the suspension of the controversial budget.

## **India**

### **Kashmir: Deadly gunfire**

On 19 November 2020, a gun battle between insurgents and security forces killed four rebels and injured two police officers at a tollbooth on a road close to Nagrota, near the city of Jammu.

## **Iran**

### **COVID 19 pandemic**

Media reports indicate that on 21 November 2020, the government tightened measures in Tehran and 160 other cities to halt the continuing high increase in corona cases. According to the spokesman for the national corona virus control staff, the situation is disproportionately serious in 124 Iranian cities. Schools, universities and bazaars have been closed. Only a few essential industries are still operative. Between 9pm and 4am, no cars are allowed on the streets except taxis. President Hassan Rouhani pleaded on state television to avoid meetings with relatives and friends. The lockdown would initially apply for a fortnight, but might be extended or reduced depending on the situation, he said.

## **Iraq**

### **Security operations against IS fighters**

Also last week, several security operations against IS fighters took place. Three Iraqi security forces were killed and eight others injured in an ambush in Salahaddin province on 21 November 2020.

On 19 November 2020, security forces killed at least 16 IS fighters in Kirkuk province and destroyed their hiding places where weapons and ammunition as well as documents and cash were secured.

Also on 19 November, an IS fighter was killed in Diyala province.

### **Attacks by IS fighters**

A bomb exploded on the roadside south of Mosul on 22 November 2020, killing at least one member of the security forces and injuring at least three others.

On 18 November 2020, at least one member of the security forces died in an attack on a checkpoint in Daquq district of Kirkuk province. The IS fighters managed to escape after the attack.

On 17 November 2020, a rocket attack on the Green Zone in Baghdad killed one child and injured at least five other people. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

### **Stationing of Iraqi security forces in Sinjar**

As part of an agreement between the Kurdish regional government and the Iraqi central government to normalise the situation in Sinjar, at least three brigades of Iraqi security forces were stationed in Sinjar on 20 November 2020. The mayor of Sinjar stated that all other armed groups must withdraw. Once the situation has stabilised and public services are provided, displaced people will be able to return to Sinjar. The majority of the area is inhabited by Yazidis.

### **Death penalty**

On 16 November 2020, a total of 21 people were hanged in a prison in Nasiriyah, Dhi Qar province. They had been convicted of terrorism and murder. The authorities did not disclose details of the offences.

## **Lebanon**

### **Major prison break in Baabda**

On 23 November 2020, a total of 69 prisoners broke out of pre-trial detention in a prison in Baabda, a suburb of Beirut. 25 have since been reinstated in custody, five others died in a car accident while fleeing from police. Currently, the background is unclear; since April 2020 there have been reports of unrest in prisons in Lebanon in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, as prisons have been overcrowded for years and pre-trial detention often lasts very long. Police said that there are no defendants in terrorist trials among the fugitives.

### **Cancellation of study on the central bank's role in the financial crisis**

On 20 November 2020, it became known that the consultancy firm Alvarez & Marshal, which was in charge of investigating the events leading to the financial crisis in Lebanon, has withdrawn from the contract, stating that any confidence has now eroded that the central bank would ever provide the necessary documentation.

The study of the central bank's role was a key demand of potential international donors, as was the formation of a new government. Neither of these demands has yet been met by Lebanon.

## **Libya**

### **Agreement on elections in December 2021**

On 16 November 2020, the 75 participants of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) meeting in Tunis agreed to hold national elections on 24 December 2021. Next week the talks will continue online; topics will include the reform of the executive structures and the formation of a transitional government.

At a meeting in Geneva at the end of October 2020, military representatives of General Chalifa Haftar and Prime Minister Fayed al-Sarraj had agreed, among other things, on an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of foreign fighters (see BN of 26 October 2020).

## **Montenegro**

### **Ethnic minority parties reject participation in government**

Recent media reports indicate that representatives of the ethnic minority parties have refused to join the Montenegrin government, despite being called upon to do so by the government coalition elected on 30 August 2020 (designated Prime Minister: Zdravko Krivokapic). This could make the new government the first since 1998 without representatives of ethnic minorities. Some of the representatives, such as the leader of the ethnic Albanian alliance "The Time is Now" Nik Gjeloshaj, told the media that the reasons were nationalist tendencies and a lack of sincerity within the government alliance. Already in October 2020, the chairman of the Bosnian party Rafet Husovic had criticised nationalist statements of the pro-Serbian party alliance "Democratic Front". The head of the non-governmental organisation Civil Alliance, Boris Raonic, has warned BIRN that the lack of representatives in the new government would exclude minorities from the political decision-making process at state level.

### **COVID 19 pandemic**

According to reports dated 23 November 2020, Montenegro has the highest infection rate in the Western Balkan region, with currently 1,620 active cases per 100,000 citizens. With a strong increase of the second wave, the number of active coronavirus infections has doubled since 1 November 2020 and is threatening the stability of the health system as in other countries of the region. Montenegro has now opened three regional COVID-19 centres in Podgorica, Berane and Bar; in other hospitals in the country, special departments are reserved for the admission of COVID patients. Hospital staff have pointed out to BIRN that nurses and doctors have to work at the limits of their capacity.

## **Morocco**

### **Barrier is extended**

Since June 2020, the Polisario Front has been more active again. On 14 November 2020 the leadership declared the termination of the ceasefire, which had been in place since 1991. The Polisario has been blocking the movement of goods in the buffer zone between Morocco and Mauritania, mainly at the Guerguerat border crossing. The Moroccan armed forces have intervened, dismantling the blockades and extending the protective barrier separating the Moroccan Sahara from Algeria and stretching as far as Mauritania in order to secure traffic between Morocco and Mauritania.

### **Health emergency extended**

On 22 November 2020 the Moroccan government extended the health emergency in Casablanca by four weeks. The restrictions include a night-time curfew, a travel ban except on presentation of an exemption certificate, the closure of parks and squares, gymnasiums and hammams, and a ban on gatherings of more than ten people.

## **Nigeria**

### **Nine kidnapped police officers released**

Nine police officers kidnapped in the state of Katsina regained their freedom on 20 November 2020, media reported citing police sources. On 8 November 2020, the police officers had been attacked by heavily armed men in military disguise. It is assumed that the kidnappers are criminals. A police spokesperson said that a rescue mission led to the liberation of the police officers. The state of Katsina is one of the states in north-western Nigeria most affected by bandit activities. Hundreds of people have been kidnapped there in recent years.



## **Pakistan**

### **Firefight in North Waziristan**

Pakistan's military has informed that on 22 November 2020, four rebels were killed and two soldiers injured in a gun battle with insurgents on the Afghan border in North Waziristan, one of the former tribal areas (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa).

### **TLP leader died in Lahore**

On 19 November 2020, the leader of the Islamist movement Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) died in Lahore (Punjab). The TLP which supports the blasphemy legislation in the country was the driving force behind the protests against France that have broken out in several Pakistani cities since the beginning of November 2020 in the dispute over cartoons of Mohammed.

### **PTI wins elections in Gilgit-Baltistan**

According to projections of 17 November 2020, the justice movement led by Prime Minister Imran Khan, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), won the elections in Gilgit-Baltistan (see BN of 16 November 2020), securing 10 of 23 seats.

## **Peru**

### **Transitional president to lead out of the government crisis**

After days of unrest, Peru has a new head of state. On 17 November 2020, centre-right politician Francisco Sagasti took the oath of office. This makes the 76-year-old the third president of Peru in just over a week. As head of state in transition, the trained engineer is expected to hold office until next year's election. Observers hope that Sagasti will be able to restore the population's confidence in politics after the recent domestic turmoil. One of the main focuses of Sagasti's presidential term, which is expected to run until July 2021, will be the fight against the COVID 19 pandemic. Most recently, the Andean state has been without a head of state for some time. On 9 November 2020, congress had removed President Martín Vizcarra from office due to corruption allegations. Thereupon, the office was provisionally taken over by the parliamentary president Manuel Merino. After fierce protests and clashes between demonstrators and police, resulting in at least two deaths, Merino resigned on 15 November 2020 (see BN of 16 November 2020). Media report that a UN mission was announced to investigate alleged human rights violations during the five-day government of Merino.

## **Somalia**

### **Attacks**

An al-Shabaab suicide bomber blew himself up in a restaurant near a police academy in Mogadishu on 17 November 2020, killing and injuring several people including members of the police force.

On 19 November 2020, an explosion killed at least three soldiers and injured several others, among them civilians, at a security checkpoint in Lafole on the road between Mogadishu and Afgoye. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack.

## **South Sudan**

### **Rising violence in the last six months**

On 17 November 2020, the United Nations (UN) informed that in the last six months, at least 1,000 people were killed and at least 400 abducted in inter-communal conflicts. Violence between rival communities has increased in recent months. The UN warns of a further escalation of violence with the onset of the dry season starting in December 2020 and lasting until January 2021.

## Syria

### **Israeli airstrikes on suspected Quds brigade positions**

On 18 November 2020, the Israeli military confirmed that it had attacked military targets in Syria during the night, following the installation the previous day of anti-personnel mines by Syrian units in Israeli-controlled territory on the Golan Heights under the command of Iranian Quds Brigades. The Quds Brigades ("Jerusalem" Brigades) are the foreign operations arm of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

An Israeli military spokesperson stated that the operation targeted the Iranian military headquarters in Syria, a secret facility at Damascus airport, and several Syrian air defence positions. Syrian state media reported three Syrian soldiers killed. A representative of the Iranian government denied reports of Iranian deaths, of which at least five are reported by the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

## Turkey

### **Arrest warrants against DTK members**

Media reports indicate that on 20 November 2020, arrest warrants were issued against approximately 100 persons on suspicion of links with the PKK. At least 72 suspects were arrested in nationwide raids, including 24 lawyers and doctors. The measures were directed against members of the Kurdish umbrella organisation DTK, which is accused of links with the PKK. Police operations took place in Istanbul, Izmir, Adiyaman and Diyarbakir. The arrests were based on the fact that the names of the suspects were mentioned in DTK documents.

### **Arrests for alleged Gülen movement supporters**

Media report that on 17 November 2020 the Turkish police arrested 67 suspects for alleged links with the Gülen movement (FETÖ), which is classified as a terrorist organisation. Within the operations launched by the Istanbul prosecutor's office in 19 provinces, the suspects were arrested and 54 arrest warrants were issued, among them against 42 former military students, one soldier on active duty and one dismissed.

They are accused, among other things, of having communicated by payphone with covert imams, who are high-ranking FETÖ members.

### **Deployment of soldiers to Azerbaijan**

On 17 November 2020, the Turkish parliament decided that the government can send troops to Azerbaijan to monitor the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh. All parties agreed to the request with the exception of the pro-Kurdish HDP. The authorisation is limited to one year. Azerbaijan is traditionally considered a close ally of Turkey.

### **COVID-19 measures**

On 17 November 2020, President Erdoğan announced new anti-corona measures due to increasing infection rates, which are to apply by decree of the interior ministry from Friday 20 November 2020 8pm local time. The decree stipulates that citizens over 65 years of age will only be allowed to leave their homes between 10am and 1pm, those under 20 years of age only between 1pm and 4pm, and the rest will only be allowed to leave their homes between 10am and 8pm. Those who have to work are excluded from the scheme so as not to disrupt supply and production chains. Supermarkets, shopping centres, hairdressers and the like may only open between 10am and 8pm. Restaurants and cafés will only be allowed to offer delivery and collection services. Cinemas will remain closed until the end of the year. School education will be provided only via distance learning until at least the end of the year.

### **Acquittal of cooperation lawyer**

After the cooperation lawyer of the German Embassy in Ankara was acquitted of the accusation of espionage on 12 November 2020, the Turkish public prosecutor's office has the possibility to appeal against the judgement, but this remains to be seen. On behalf of the German Embassy in Turkey, the cooperation lawyer had verified information relating to applications for asylum in Germany by Turkish nationals. Media report that he had also carried out such legal work for the embassies of the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. As a lawyer admitted in the country, he had legal access to Turkish judicial databases.

## Uganda

### **Opposition politicians arrested, dozens killed in protests**

At least 37 people are reported killed and many more injured in protests that erupted after the arrest of presidential candidate Bobi Wine during his election campaign in eastern Uganda on 18 November 2020. Wine was arrested for violating COVID-19 restrictions by mobilising large groups of people for his election campaign events. Critics say, however, that the ruling political party did the same, without any arrests having been made. After Wine's arrest, protests broke out in the capital Kampala. Police and military used tear gas and live ammunition to disperse the protesters. Wine was finally released on bail on 20 November 2020. Hundreds of his supporters were also arrested and accused of participating in unlawful demonstrations, inciting violence, damaging property, looting and other offences. Wine has been arrested several times; he is considered the most serious threat to President Museveni. Another opposition politician, Patrick Oboi Amuriat of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party, was also arrested on the same day.

## Venezuela

### **First US ambassador in over 10 years**

On 18 November 2020, the US Senate confirmed James Story as the new United States (US) Ambassador to Venezuela; he will take up his work from Colombia. It has been unclear for some time how relations between the US and Venezuela will develop. After the US had long pursued a policy of targeted sanctions against Maduro and his associates as well as certain state institutions, under President Trump there had been an increased reliance on general economic sanctions, which, while limiting the regime's ability to act, also exacerbated the crisis for the population. How future relations between these two countries will develop must be seen as a central point in their further development. Despite political differences, economic relations had always been good until the Trump Presidency.

## Yemen

### **Threat of famine**

On 20 November 2020, the UN warned that the world's worst famine in decades was imminent in Yemen. 80 percent of the population is in need of some form of humanitarian aid. At the same time, the US is considering classifying the Houthis as a terrorist organisation. Aid agencies fear that this will make it much more difficult to implement humanitarian aid operations in Houthi-controlled areas.

### **Mobile health facility attacked**

On 17 November 2020, unidentified armed men fired on a mobile medical clinic of the Emirate Red Crescent in the Taizz governorate while the staff was providing medical care for people.

### **Fights between STC and government troops**

Last week there were reports of heavy fighting between Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces and government troops around Zinjibar, capital of the Abyan governorate in southern Yemen. At least 50 fighters from both sides have been killed.