

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

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## Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

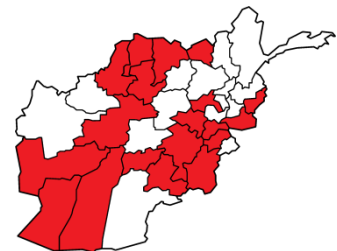
# Briefing Notes

21 August 2017

### Afghanistan

#### Armed confrontations

The fighting, purges, raids, air and drone strikes by the security forces continue as well as the ambushes and attacks of the insurgents which sometimes also kill or injure civilians. According to media reports the following provinces were affected last week: Nangarhar, Kunar (east), Jawzjan (north, the district centres of Aqcha, Mardyan and Khaniqa are besieged by the insurgents), Faryab, Sar-Sar, Balkh (north), Kunduz (northeast), Helmand, Uruzgan, Zabul, Nimroz (south), Ghazni, Paktika, Paktia (southeast), Parwan, Logar, Maidan Wardak (centre), and Farah (west).



#### Assaults and attacks

On 14 August 2017 three staff members of the Catholic Relief Service (CRS) were shot by unknown killers in Ghor province (west).

On 15 August 2017 an Afghan secret service agent was killed in a suicide bombing that also injured four more agents. Two civilians died and eight were injured in a bombing in Chora district in Uruzgan province (south). 40 bodies were found in Sar-i-Pul province in two mass graves, they probably were victims of the insurgents.

The UN meanwhile confirmed reports that Taliban fighters together with IS had assaulted a village in Jawzjan province (north) on 03 August 2017 and killed at least 36 people, of which at least 18 had been civilians (see BN of 07 August 2017).

A missile fired by the Taliban killed one civilian and injured five more in Nangarhar province (east) on 16 August 2017. All of the victims were members of a family attending a funeral.

On 17 August 2017 three civilians and three Taliban died in a suicide bombing in Helmand (south, in Greshk district).

On 19 August 2017 the body guard of a member of parliament was shot when the MP was attacked in Parwan (Bagram district, centre). Two girls died and eight civilians were wounded when the Taliban fired mortars in Kunar province (east).

### China

#### Hong Kong: Activists sentenced

A court in Hong Kong sentenced three leaders of the 2014 protests for democratic elections in Hong Kong that became known as the 'umbrella protests', to several months imprisonment on 17 August 2017. Student leaders Joshua Wong and Alex Chow received prison sentences of six and seven months resp., the former deputy Nathan Law eight months. All of them had already been sentenced on probation to do community service hours in August 2016; the prosecution had appealed these sentences. According to police reports about 22,000 people protested against the court's sentence in Hong Kong on 20 August 2017.

## **Iraq**

### **Tal Afar**

The media reported the beginning of the bombing of IS positions in the city of Tal Afar by the air force last week, marking the initiation of a new offensive against one of the last remaining major IS strongholds in north Iraq. The air strikes shall be followed up by a ground operation. Tal Afar is about 80 kilometres west of Mosul, from where the Iraqi army had recently ousted IS after many months of fighting.

## **Yemen**

### **The coalition is responsible for most of the attacks on schools and hospitals**

Media reports that are based on the UN draft report on children in armed conflicts say that three quarters of all attacks on schools and hospitals (38 of 52) in 2016 were executed by the coalition. Under Saudi leadership the coalition is fighting the Houthi rebels and followers of former President Saleh. In the same period the civil war had claimed 1,340 victims that were minors and 683 of these attacks had to be attributed to the coalition. The media also say that the draft report for 2016 had included similar results which former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon deleted when Saudi Arabia threatened to stop the funding for many UN programmes.

Civil war has been raging in Yemen since September 2014. The Saudi-led military operation to support the internationally recognized government of President Hadi started in March 2015. In addition to Saudi Arabia the coalition includes e.g. Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, and Senegal. The US, France, and the UK provide logistics support.

Because of the war and the resulting shortage of water and medical care a cholera epidemic has broken out that this year has claimed almost 2,000 lives. It is assumed that half a million people have been infected.

## **Kyrgyzstan**

### **Leader of the opposition party Ata Meken given eight-year prison sentence**

On 16 August 2017 a court in Bishkek sentenced the leader of the parliamentary opposition party Ata Meken (fatherland), Omurbek Tekebayev, to eight years in prison for corruption and fraud. His party claims that the sentence was politically motivated to prevent him from standing for the next presidential elections on 15 October 2017. Tekebayev, who was arrested in February 2017, is considered President Atambaev's harshest critic.

## **Kenya**

### **Odinga challenges presidential elections**

On 18 August 2017 the loser of the presidential elections of 08 August 2017, Raila Odinga, filed suit against the election results with the Supreme Court. Among other things his camp is convinced that the election computers were tampered in favour of the winner Uhuru Kenyatta. In the view of most of national and international election observers, however, the elections had been free and fair. Only few of Odinga's followers turned out on 14 August 2017 for the strike he had called for on 13 August 2017.

## **Mali**

### **17 casualties in attacks on UN peace mission**

In two attacks on UN bases on 14 August 2017 at least 17 soldiers lost their lives. In the morning of 14 August 2017 four people died in an assault on a UN base in Douentza. The peace mission MINUSMA informed that in the evening of the same day unknown attackers assaulted a UN camp in Timbuktu. In this attack and the subsequent chase of the attackers at least 13 people died, including five Malian guards, a policeman, and a civilian. The report also says that seven people, including UN soldiers, were injured in the attack. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres denounced the attacks and stressed that attacks on UN peace missions may be considered war crimes under international law.

### **ICC sentences jihadist to payment of damages for destruction**

The International Criminal Court (ICC) sentenced jihadist Al Mahdi, who is serving a prison sentence, to payment of damages of 2.7 million euros for the destruction of world heritage sites in Timbuktu. The ICC handed down the judgement on 17 August 2017 in The Hague. Already in September 2016 the judges had sentenced Al Mahdi to nine years imprisonment for his leading role in the destruction of century-old religious buildings in the oasis town of Timbuktu. He had admitted to leading the attacks and having personally participated in the demolition of five of the monuments. During the about ten months in 2012 that the Islamist group Ansar Dine controlled northern Mali, its member Al Mahdi had headed the so-called vice squad in Timbuktu. In this position he ordered the destruction of nine mausoleums and part of Sidi Yahia mosque, because the worship of saints is inadmissible in the strict interpretation of Islam. When sentencing Al Mahdi in September 2016 the ICC for the first time punished someone for the war crime of destruction of cultural sites.

### **Long prison term for former Gao head of police**

Aliou Mahmar Touré, who was the head of police in Gao during the jihadists' rule of northern Mali, was sentenced to ten years in prison for the atrocities he committed. Touré became known for cutting off hands and feet as „Islamic Police Chief of Gao.“ On 18 August 2017 a court in the capital Bamako found him guilty of all crimes he was charged with (including endangering state security and causing serious bodily harm). He was accused of having cut off the hands of thieves and ordered unveiled women to be publicly whipped. Touré denied the charges. The trial lasted one day.

Human rights organizations deplored that Touré was not tried for torture or war crimes as well.

## **Nigeria**

### **Boko Haram: 28 casualties in suicide bombings in a market place and a refugee camp**

In the evening of 15 August 2017 three female suicide bombers entered the market place in the village of Mandarari (about 30 km south-east of Maiduguri near the city of Konduga, in Borno state). One of the terrorists blew herself up in the market, the other two near a camp for internal refugees killing at least 28 people and wounding 82.

### **Boko Haram: Two villages in Adamawa burnt down**

In the night of 14 August 2017 presumably members of the Islamist terror organization Boko Haram attacked the villages of Nyibango and Muduhu (Madagali Local Government Area) in the north-eastern state of Adamawa. They looted food, killed cattle and completely burnt down both villages.

## **Sierra Leone**

### **Natural disaster - more than a thousand feared dead**

In the early morning hours of 14 August 2017 a mudslide swept down from „Sugarloaf Hill“ into Freetown's district of Regent (15 kilometres from the city centre) following three days of torrential rains. The disaster might have claimed more than 1,000 lives. Along their path the mud carried away at least one hundred houses and innumerable huts in which thousands were sleeping. President Ernest Bai Koroma ordered one week of official mourning. This is the second natural disaster after the Ebola epidemic that hit one of the poorest countries in Africa.

## **Somalia**

### **Attacks**

On 14 August 2017 al-Shabaab blew up a car bomb in a taxi in front of a hotel in Mogadishu killing the taxi driver in whose car the extremists had hidden the bomb.

Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the murder of an official of the Hir-Shabelle transitional administration in Mahaday (Middle Shabelle region) on 16 August 2017 and for the murder of a Somali intelligence service agent in Mogadishu's Waberi district on 17 August 2017. On 17 August 2017 al-Shabaab members assassinated the head of the Somali association of football referees in Mogadishu.

## **Fighting**

Al-Shabaab said it was responsible for the firing at a base of Burundian AMISOM soldiers in Mahaday (Middle Shabelle region) on 15 August 2017 and for booby trapping a convoy of Burundian troops in the same city two days later. Mahaday is located on a main traffic route linking Mogadishu and the north. The US Africa Command (AFRICOM) flew three air strikes against al-Shabaab in Jilib (Middle Juba region) on 16 and 17 August 2017. President Farmajo informed that seven extremists were killed by these.

## **Upcoming elections in Somaliland**

On 12 August 2017 the Puntland government transferred soldiers to the Sool and Sanaag regions to prevent the government of Somaliland's preparation of the presidential and parliamentary elections in November 2017. The territorial ownership of these two regions has been a matter of dispute between Puntland and Somaliland for a long time already.

## **South Sudan**

### **Over two million people have fled abroad**

According to a UN announcement of 17 August 2017 more than one million South Sudanese civilians fled to Uganda to escape the armed conflict, famine and sexual violence of the civil war that has been devastating their country since the end of 2013. Every day about 1,800 refugees are crossing the border to Uganda. Another million fled from South Sudan to Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic.

## **Syria**

### **More than 600,000 returnees**

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Geneva informed on 11 August 2017 that more than 600,000 Syrian refugees returned to their home towns between January and July 2017. More than 80 percent of them were internal refugees, while the others came back from the neighbouring countries Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. Many of the returnees wanted to safeguard their property in their homes, others believed that the economic and security situations had improved.

According to UN reports over eleven million people have fled and as long as the civil war continued there could be no well organized return.

### **Russian air strike kill 200 IS fighters**

Russian news agencies reported that more than 200 fighters died in an air strike of the Russian air force on IS near Damascus. They also succeeded in destroying military equipment. There was no information about when the attack happened. Allegedly the fighters were moving towards the city of Deir al-Zor where IS is currently concentrating its forces, after it was pushed out of the south of Raqqqa province and the west of Homs province by the government's ground forces.

### **Damascus: Casualties in missile attack on trade show**

AFP and others reported six casualties caused by a missile attack on the International Trade Fair in the capital on 20 August 2017; about twelve people were wounded. The trade show took place for the first time since 2011. The government said that it was meant to revive international trade relations. Also western companies participated in the trade show.

## **Togo**

### **Casualties during protests**

On 19 August 2017 security forces in the capital Lomé and in the cities of Anié, Kara, and Sokodé used force to disperse protests organized by the opposition party Parti National Panafricain (PNP) in which the limitation of the number of terms of office of the president was demanded among other things. At least two protesters were killed in Sokodé. The security forces dispelled a PNP protest in Lomé on 20 August 2017.

## **Central African Republic/Democratic Republic of Congo**

### **Wave of refugees hits the DR Congo/continued violence in the CAR**

On 15 August 2017 UNHCR reported that last week more than 10,000 people fled from the insecurity in Bema in the Central African Republic (CAR) to the city of Yakoma in North Ubangi province in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The report says that the flow of refugees to other areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo continues as well. Since mid-May 2017 a total of 75,000 refugees had entered the DR Congo, often in remote areas where little humanitarian aid is available.

Violence in the Central African Republic continues. On 19 August 2017 at least 13 people were killed in fighting between Anti-Balaka and the Popular Front for the Renaissance in the Central African Republic (FPRC) in Bria city.

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