

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	795
Land:	Gaza-Vestbredden
Kilde:	BAMF – Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
Titel:	Briefing Notes
Udgivet:	17. juni 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	25. september 2024



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

17 June 2024

Afghanistan

Security situation

According to media reports on 16.06.24, eight Taliban were arrested in the city of Herat on suspicion of belonging to the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP). There was no comment from the Taliban on the incident.

According to media reports on 12.06.24, the National Resistance Front (NRF) is regrouping in Panjshir province. The Taliban have sent around 100 fighters to Shotul and Anaba districts to prevent the conflict from flaring up again. There has been no large-scale fighting in the province for a year. On 12.06.24 it was reported that two fighters of the Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan, TTP) were killed by unidentified assailants in Khost province. A report in the Long War Journal on 08.06.24 says that the Emir of al-Qaeda, Sayf al-Adl, has called on all members to travel to Afghanistan to learn from the "heroic" Taliban how to establish an Islamic state and fight the "Zionists" in Israel and the West in general.¹

Governance & persecution

A new study by the Middle East Institute (Taliban Leadership Tracker) of 11.06.24 found that of around 1,200 people in the Taliban leadership, around 90 percent are ethnic Pashtuns - Tajiks make up 5.4 percent, Uzbeks 2.8, Hazaras 0.7, Turkmen 0.3, and Baluchis 0.3 percent.

On 13.06.24, the Taliban flogged eleven people for various offences in Kandahar province. In the last ten days, around 100 people are reported to have been flogged across the country.

According to a report on 11.06.24, the Taliban dismissed 20 Tajik employees of the local virtue ministry (muhtasibs) in Panjshir province, according to unconfirmed statements on ethnic grounds.

Media reports of 09.06.24 say that Tajik lieutenant colonel Abdul Ghiyath from Panjshir province died as a result of torture after being released from a two-year detention in a Taliban secret service prison.

According to a report on 10.06.24, the Taliban's justice ministry has launched a nationwide campaign to reclaim illegally confiscated land. For this purpose, a special commission has been set up and has apparently reclaimed already 60,000 hectares of land in the city of Kabul alone. Nationwide, the figure is said to be 2.5 million hectares. However, the confiscation also involves illegal actions by the Taliban and the displacement of ethnic minorities (cf. BN of 10.06.24). A report of 09.06.24 says that, for example, a Taliban district governor of Darwagha in Badakhshan province seized some 4,000 hectares of pasture and farmland and sold the land as building land for residential areas. Following protests, the residents were reportedly beaten and arrested. Already in mid-April 2024, the Taliban had confiscated 10,000 hectares of agricultural land in the province.

On 13.06.24, UNICEF pointed out that 1,000 days have passed since girls were banned from attending secondary schools from the 6th grade onwards. In this context, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, has published a new report for the 56th session of the UN Human Rights Council on the Taliban's systematic discrimination of women and girls, calling for the criminalisation of "gender apartheid" (as an extension of the crime of apartheid under Article 7 (1) j) of the Rome Statute) as *ius cogens* (i.e. compelling criminal international law binding on all nations).²

Algeria

Protests over water shortage

Media report that on 07.06. and 08.06.24, demonstrators gathered in the central Algerian city of Tiaret in protest against the water shortage in the region, which has been ongoing for months, and the associated rationing of water. The protesters set fire to car tyres, erected barricades and blocked roads. The government sent several ministers to calm the situation and promise to restore the drinking water supply as quickly as possible.³

Belarus

Serbian extradition ruling for Belarusian opposition activist

On 13.06.24, the supreme court in the Serbian capital Belgrade upheld a ruling ordering the extradition of Belarusian journalist and opposition activist Andrej Hnyot. He had been arrested at Belgrade airport in October 2023 at the request of Belarus. Hnyot is accused of accusation of tax evasion, which he denies. Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya says that Hnyot, who is currently under house arrest, may face torture if extradited. The court's decision can still be appealed.⁴

Central African Republic

UN report on impact of conflict in neighbouring Sudan

A news agency report referring to a report published by UN experts on 14.06.24 says that there are fears of a "spillover effect" to the Central African Republic (CAR) of the conflict which has been raging in Sudan since April 2023. Apparently, the area around the Am Dafok border crossing (Vakanga prefecture), through which thousands of people have fled Sudan (cf. BN of 08.05.23), is used by the Sudanese militia and conflict party Rapid Support Forces (RSF) as a logistical centre. The RSF can easily move between both sides of the border and apparently recruits fighters in the CAR, also with the support of local rebel groups, the report says. The RSF presence has also led to air strikes by the Sudanese army (SAF) in the border area. This situation jeopardises the safety of the civilian population and hampers humanitarian activities in the area, the report concludes.⁵

Colombia

Two victims of female genital mutilation in Bogotá

Two girls, a 23-day-old baby and a 13-year-old girl, were victims of FGM in Bogotá. According to the health ministry, both cases came to light due to health complications that required urgent treatment. The ministry estimates around 90 cases in 2023 in Colombia, but there are no verifiable figures. Activists working on behalf of the indigenous Emberá group accuse the government of passivity and inadequate registration. FGM is a rare but existing practice in Colombia, mainly among the Emberá indigenous community and in some Afro-American peoples. The Colombian government and NGOs are working to eradicate these traditions by awareness-raising campaigns and thus improve the protection of the girls concerned.⁶

Pension reform

On 15.06.24, the Colombian congress approved a pension reform that includes several key measures to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the pension system. A key element of the reform is the introduction of a system that includes both state and private pension funds. Accordingly, people who earn two to three times the minimum monthly wage must pay into the pay-as-you-go state solidarity system, Colpensiones. This removes the option of choosing between the private and state system regardless of income level. In addition, the retirement age will be gradually increased to 65 to adjust it to rising life expectancy, and a minimum pension amount will be introduced to ensure that all pensioners receive a basic pension. The reform also provides for a redistribution of pension contributions, with higher incomes being charged more in order to subsidise the pensions of lower income groups. This is intended to promote social justice and reduce poverty in old age.⁷

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Several dozen civilian casualties in new ADF attacks

The rebel group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) is believed to have killed up to 150 civilians in several attacks on towns and villages in North Kivu province in June 2024. This was reported by the local authorities and civil society representatives. On 07.06.24, the inhabitants of the villages of Masala, Keme and Mahini were attacked by men carrying guns and machetes. Supported by the Red Cross, volunteers searched for missing people and have so far reported at least 41 deaths. IS, whom the ADF had joined, claimed responsibility for around 15 attacks on villages and roads near the town of Beni (North Kivu) from 01.06. to 11.06.24, stating to have killed 125 people, almost all of them civilians. The administrative head of Beni said that at least 109 people were killed in ADF attacks in the first ten days of June 2024. In the Lubero region, media reported over 40 new deaths after an attack on the village of Mayikengo on 12.06.24. The government blames the rebel group ADF for the attacks.

Since the beginning of 2024, there have been increasing reports of deadly attacks on civilians by the rebel group in Ituri and North Kivu provinces (cf. BN of 22.04.24). The ADF rebel group originates from neighbouring Uganda and has also established itself in eastern DRC. They have pledged allegiance to IS and frequently carry out attacks, further destabilising regions where many militant groups are active.⁸

Egypt

At least 200 football fans briefly detained; over 123 arrested in past seven months for critical statements on war in Gaza

A local human rights organisation reports that on 14.06.24, security forces arrested more than 200 football fans in Alexandria for chanting against Israel's war in Gaza and raising the Palestinian flag. On 15.06.24, they were all released after reportedly being threatened with re-arrest and prosecution if they repeated these actions.

Amnesty International (AI) reports that in the past seven months, more than 123 people have been arrested who showed their support for the Palestinians in Gaza and their criticism of the ongoing war there in peaceful demonstrations and comments on social media. At least 95 people are apparently still in detention on charges including involvement in terrorism, spreading false news or participating in illegal gatherings (cf. BN of 29.04.24 and 27.05.24).⁹

Ghana

Protests over recurring power cuts

Led by several civil society groups, hundreds of people demonstrated in the capital Accra on 08.06.24 against the recurring power cuts in the country. Under the slogan #DumsorMustStop, local celebrities called for the protest to hold the Ghanaian government accountable for the electricity crisis. The demonstrators were rallying against the persistent, irregular and unpredictable power outages - known as dumsor - that have caused huge losses to private individuals and especially businesspeople for months, in some cases driving them to financial ruin.

The date of the protest had to be postponed once, until an agreement was reached between the organisers and the Ghanaian police. On the day of the demonstration, people blocked the busy Madina Road as planned from dusk, the time when several districts of Ghana's major cities suffer power cuts.

The government insists that it is not a power crisis, but a minor problem with some transformers. However, in April 2024, President Akufo-Addo had already ordered the suspension of electricity exports to neighbouring countries in response to the problem.¹⁰

Iran

Female cartoonist sentenced to six years in prison

According to media reports on 13.06.24, a female cartoonist has been sentenced to six years in prison. Her lawyer said that the sentence was for insulting sacred principles of belief and propaganda against the Islamic Republic.

The convict, an internationally award-winning artist, had already been sentenced to 18 months in prison on several charges relating to activities critical of the government. She was last arrested in April 2024 and was allegedly beaten in detention by security forces.¹¹

Protests of retired teachers dispersed

Media reported on 12.06.24 that a gathering of retired teachers in Tehran was broken up by police security forces. Unconfirmed sources reported that demonstrators were beaten. The number of demonstrators was not specified. For several years, retired pensioners have been protesting at irregular intervals in several provinces of the country, demanding an adjustment of their salaries (cf. BN of 24.07.23). For the most part, these gatherings take place without violent clashes.¹²

Prominent convicted activist sentenced to further prison terms

According to reports in Persian-language foreign media, prominent activist Fatemeh Sepehri, who had previously been arrested and convicted, was sentenced to further prison terms (cf. BN of 09.08.21). She had become known for her involvement in a campaign demanding revolutionary leader Ali Khamenei to resign, among other things, and has now been sentenced to more than 18 years in prison, as her brother reported. She is reportedly accused of supporting Israel because she voiced criticism of the Hamas attack on Israel on 07.10.23. Together with the prison sentences already pending, her total sentence amounts to more than 37 years in prison.¹³

Iraq

Chaldean patriarch back in office

On 05.06.24, Prime Minister Sudani reinstated Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako as head of the Chaldean Church in Iraq and worldwide. In July 2023, President Rashid had withdrawn a decree by which Sako was formally recognised as Chaldean head and thus had authority over Iraq's Christian foundations (cf. BN of 17.07.23). Sako has meanwhile returned to Baghdad after spending some time in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan (KR-I).

Sako himself accuses the Babylon Movement, a formally Christian militia that is nevertheless loyal to Iran, of orchestrating his removal from office in 2023 for power tactical reasons.¹⁴

NGO: Over 800 airstrikes on Kurdistan and Nineveh since the beginning of 2024

The U.S.-Canadian NGO Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) reported on 16.06.24 that between January and June 2024, the Turkish military carried out 833 attacks in the KR-I and Nineveh province. Eight civilians were killed in these attacks. Over 350 of the attacks took place in Dohuk and Erbil provinces, 102 in Sulaymaniyah and ten in Nineveh.

Tuürkiye has been fighting PKK positions in northern Iraq for several years. Some villages in the most affected areas have been uninhabited for some time as a result of the conflict. The most recent suspected Turkish airstrike took place on 14.06.24 near the town of Ranya (Sulaymaniyah province). No casualties were reported¹⁵

Lebanon

Situation in the Lebanese-Israeli border area

Hezbollah and the Israeli army continue to exchange fire. After a high-ranking Hezbollah commander was killed in an Israeli military strike on 11.06.24, mutual shelling intensified significantly in the following days.

At least 471 people, including at least 91 civilians, have now been reported dead in the border area on the Lebanese side, and 15 soldiers and eleven civilians on the Israeli side.¹⁶

Mali

Humanitarian situation

According to information from UN OCHA, at least seven million people in Mali (about a third of the total population), more than half of them children, are dependent on humanitarian aid in 2024. By August 2024, a total

of 1.3 million people will be affected by food insecurity. Inhabitants of the eastern Ménaka and Kidal regions are particularly affected. The situation has also deteriorated in the north of the country and in the Mopti region (central Mali). At the same time, Mali is seeing a further increase in refugees from neighbouring countries, particularly from Burkina Faso. More than 65,000 refugees have apparently arrived in Mali since the beginning of 2024 alone. Within the country, there are more than 350,000 internally displaced people.

The uncertain situation is also affecting education, with 1,960 schools closed and 536,000 children unable to go to school. Located in the Sahel region, Mali is not only affected by a severe humanitarian crisis and a very fragile security situation but is also suffering greatly from the effects of climate change. Low rainfall and extreme heat, as seen most recently in March/April 2024, pose major challenges for the population (cf. BN of 06.05.24).¹⁷

Mozambique

Restriction of media freedom

In early June 2024, two media professionals covering a demonstration were attacked by security forces. Journalist and human rights activist Sheila Wilson was temporarily detained and released several hours later without being charged. Media professionals have been facing increasing repression of media freedom for years. Since 2017, there have been massive restrictions on free reporting and threats against media workers, particularly in the context of reporting on the armed conflict in Cabo Delgado.¹⁸

Niger

Immunity of ousted President Bazoum lifted

Media report that on 14.06.24, the supreme court announced the lifting of the immunity of Niger's President Mohamed Bazoum, who was ousted a year ago. Bazoum was removed from office on 26.07.23 and has since been detained together with his wife in the presidential palace in the capital Niamey (cf. BN of 31.07.23). The loss of immunity from prosecution would pave the way for a trial against Bazoum before a military court. The military junta, which has been in power since the coup, had already announced in August 2023 that it intended to charge Bazoum with "high treason and endangering internal and external security" (cf. BN of 14.08.23).¹⁹

Nigeria

Northwest: violent incidents and reports of military success

Media report that on 09.06.24, unidentified assailants killed at least 25 people and abducted many others in the village of Yargoje in the Kankara Local Government Area (LGA) in northwestern Katsina State. Other reports on the same incident put the death toll at 50. Apparently, dozens of the attackers arrived at the scene on motorbikes. Similar acts of violence have occurred several times in this area recently.

Another report on gang crime in the region also attracted attention. According to media reports on 13.06.24, the Nigerian military killed Buharin Yadi (alias Buhari Alhaji Halidu), leader of a criminal gang, and 36 gang members in the border area with neighbouring Kaduna state. This gang is notorious in both states for raiding villages, stealing cattle, arms trafficking and drug smuggling. Reports of military success of this kind occur with some regularity in various parts of Nigeria (cf. BN of 20.11.23 and 03.06.24). The Defence Headquarters (DHQ) has informed that in early June 2024, the military killed a total of 197 members of violent groups and arrested 310 others in several regions within one week.²⁰

Niger State: Abductees released

Media reported on 11.06.24 that 40 of the 150 or so people have regained their freedom who had been kidnapped in Niger State on 24.05.24 (cf. BN of 27.05.24). In return, relatives and friends of the abductees handed over to the kidnappers six motorbikes worth NGN 1.2 million each (approx. EUR 750, as of 17.06.24) and cash amounting to NGN 2 million (approx. EUR 1,250, as of 17.06.24). Negotiations are ongoing regarding the release of the remaining hostages. Niger State, Nigeria's largest federal state in terms of area, is located in the west of the Middle Belt zone.

Attacks on towns and kidnapping crime are a major security problem in the region (cf. BN of 31.05.21, 28.02, 07.03 and 28.03.22, 21.08.23 and 29.04.24).²¹

Northeast: Travellers kidnapped by Islamists

On 10.06.24, unidentified individuals temporarily blocked a motorway near Auno town in northeastern Borno State and kidnapped an unknown number of travellers. According to media reports, the perpetrators are suspected to be members of the Islamist Boko Haram group. Kidnapping for ransom is a source of funding for Boko Haram.²²

Pakistan

Punjab: Two Ahmadis killed; hostilities against Ahmadis in Mandi Bahauddin

On 08.06.24, two Ahmadis were shot dead 20 minutes apart on the street for religious reasons in Saad Ullah Pur, Mandi Bahauddin district of Punjab province. Police arrested the suspected perpetrator, who is still underage and an orthodox Sunni Koran student of the Bareilvi movement Ahle Sunnat. The madrassa (Islamic teaching centre) he attended apparently teaches content directed against Ahmadis. In this context, a spokesperson for the Ahmadiyya community has reported increasing hostility towards Ahmadis in Mandi Bahauddin. There is increasing incitement against Ahmadis in the community. Pregnant Ahmadi women have been directly threatened and there has been a smear campaign with death threats against the appointment of an Ahmadi as a policeman in Mandi Bahauddin. In addition, two videos with anti-Ahmadi rhetoric have emerged in the city of Jhelum. In one of the videos, a person close to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Labbaik party calls for violence against Ahmadis. In the other, the speaker threatens to kill Ahmadis who perform the religious ritual of animal sacrifice.

A report published by the National Commission of Human Rights Pakistan in April 2024 shows that the Ahmadiyya community remains the minority group most affected by violence and discrimination.²³

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Suspected sectarian-motivated attack in Kurram

On 16.06.24, four people were killed and two others injured in a bomb explosion in the Kurram tribal district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. Media reports suggest that it was an intra-confessional sectarian attack.²⁴

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Gaza Strip: current developments; humanitarian situation

On 14.06.24, the Hamas-led health ministry stated that more than 37,266 Palestinians had been killed and 85,102 others wounded in Gaza Strip the start of the war. The ministry does not officially distinguish between combatants and civilians.

In addition, according to information from the Israeli military on 16.06.24, a total of 309 military personnel have been killed since the start of the ground offensive.

Fighting in Gaza continues, including airstrikes by the Israeli military. Limited ground offensives are also taking place throughout the Gaza Strip, including in Beit Hanoun in the north, south of Gaza City, eastern Deir al-Balah, the northeastern part of Khan Younis and eastern, western and central Rafah.

According to UN OCHA on 14.06.24, the latest military developments have led to a further deterioration in the water supply. In Jabaliya, five wells have been destroyed, and in Rafah two wells, a supply line from an Egyptian desalination plant and two local desalination plants. Overall, it is estimated that about 67 percent of water and sanitation facilities and infrastructure have been destroyed or damaged in the last eight months.

17 of the 36 hospitals in the Gaza Strip are still partially functional, but 14 of them are only partially accessible due to the destruction around them and the critical security situation. In Rafah, where the ground offensives continue, there is no functioning hospital. Instead, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) operates a field hospital there. Another field hospital, run by the UAE, is only partially operational due to limited accessibility. In Khan Younis, the al-Khair hospital has been able to resume partial and limited operation. In northern Gaza, access to three hospitals has been restored to a limited extent since the partial withdrawal of Israeli troops on 31.05.24. Necessary evacuations of patients from Gaza are still not possible.

According to UN estimates, more than 1 million Palestinians may be facing extreme hunger by mid-July 2024. On 14.06.24, the U.S. military announced that the temporary floating harbour would have to be disconnected from the mainland due to bad weather conditions and potential damage. The UN has not yet resumed food aid distribution via the facility after a temporary pause to reassess the security situation and resolve ethical concerns following the military use of parts of the pier facility to evacuate the four freed hostages and one wounded soldier last week (cf. BN of 10.06.24). On 16.06.24, the Israeli military announced that it would immediately begin to observe daytime breaks in fighting on an approximately 12 km stretch of road in Rafah to allow for the distribution of humanitarian aid supplies via the Kerem Shalom crossing. The military stressed that operations in Rafah would continue as planned. The UN has informed that between 06.05. and 06.06.24, it only had access to an average of 68 trucks with aid supplies per day (500 are needed daily) due to the critical security situation. According to the Israeli authorities, an average of 201 trucks entered Gaza every day between 02.05. and 23.06.24. However, many aid deliveries are still piling up at the border crossings.²⁵

West Bank: Several dead and injured

The Palestinian health ministry stated that on 11.06.24, six Palestinians were killed in armed clashes with the Israeli military in Jenin, in the northern part of the West Bank.

In the previous week, 13 more Palestinians were reportedly killed and 75 others wounded during operations by Israeli military in refugee camps and villages in the West Bank. Most of them were in the al-Far'a refugee camp, in Jenin and in the Aqabat Jaber refugee camp.

On 15.06.24, a minor Palestinian was shot dead by the Israeli military in the city of Nablus, in the north of the West Bank. According to an anonymous statement by an employee in the Israeli security sector, Israeli troops opened fire on Palestinians who were throwing stones at military personnel during an operation.

This brings the total number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank between 07.10.23 and 10.06.24 to 521. More than 5,200 others were apparently wounded. During the same period, twelve Israelis, including five settlers and seven military personnel, were also killed and 105 others were wounded. Between 07.10.23 and 10.06.24, a total of 968 Palestinians were also reported to have been attacked by settlers.²⁶

Republic of Moldova

Action against pro-Russian media

The EU envoy to the Republic of Moldova, Janis Mazeiks, has stated that with its decision at the beginning of 2024 to suspend the broadcasting licences of twelve TV stations, the government in Chisinau is risking accusations of censorship and the appearance of rewarding pro-government reporting. The TV stations are indirectly owned by the two fugitive, pro-Russian oligarchs Ilan Shor and Vladimir Plahotniuc. "While we understand that suspending licences is a necessary step in the fight against hate speech," Mazeiks said, "it is essential that these actions are carried out through transparent and fair rules in order to maintain public trust." Against a backdrop of pro-Russian disinformation and propaganda, the pro-European government's actions have sparked a debate about freedom of expression in the country.²⁷

EU Commission recommends opening EU accession negotiations

The EU Commission has recommended the simultaneous opening of accession talks with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, saying that the country is sufficiently prepared to formally start the process. Moldova has made the necessary progress in judicial reform, "de-oligarchisation" and the fight against corruption. The decision now rests with the EU member states.²⁸

Somalia

Attack and road blockades by al-Shabaab

On 15.06.24, at least six Somali soldiers were reportedly killed by a landmine. The incident occurred near Baidoa (Bay Region) and was claimed by al-Shabaab.

According to local reports, Al-Shabaab has set up at least four new roadblocks between Mogadishu and Afgooye, Wanla Weyn and Leego (Lower Shabelle Region). This is an important trade route between Mogadishu and South

West State. Members of al-Shabaab reportedly search vehicles and people and extort money so that the travellers can continue their journey.²⁹

Syria

Northeastern Syria: High-ranking IS member killed

According to reports on 11.06.24, a high-ranking member of IS, who is believed to have carried out attacks on Iraqi government troops in the past, was killed during a military operation by Iraqi security forces in Raqqa city in the previous days. The operation apparently took place in cooperation with the U.S.-led anti-IS coalition. Further details about the operation were not immediately available.³⁰

Southern Syria: Increase in sieges and kidnappings of government forces by armed groups

An article published by the online portal Syria Direct on 13.06.24 reports an increase in sieges of government security facilities and abductions of government forces by armed groups in Dar'a in order to force the release of detained individuals.

In the governorate nominally recaptured by the government, numerous armed groups in local control are reportedly increasingly using this tactic to free people associated with them from detention. According to a local source, this tactic has been used eleven times in the village of Jassim alone over the past year and a half.

In addition, local tribes and social leaders as well as central committees established in 2018 as part of the so-called "reconciliation agreements" between opposition groups and the government, which have their own armed factions, also reportedly exert pressure aiming at the release of imprisoned inhabitants of Dar'a. Apparently, the central committees first contact the Syrian government directly. If this does not lead to the release of the people concerned, the committees reportedly resort to threats and military force.³¹

Türkiye

Numbers and situation of prisoners

In the Council of Europe's annual criminal justice statistics for 2022 published on 06.06.24, Türkiye ranks first in Europe with a total of 348,265 prisoners, i.e. 405 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants. In the same period, there were 58,098 people imprisoned in Germany, amounting to 69 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants. The number of prisoners in Türkiye rose by 15 percent compared to 2021. An expert said that these figures can be attributed to the large number of people sentenced under anti-terror laws. The World Organisation Against Torture (Organisation Mondiale contre la Torture, OMCT) says that the imprisonment rate in Türkiye increased by 89.3 percent between 2011 and 2021.

On 01.06.24, the central prisons commission of the Turkish human rights organisation İnsan Hakları Derneği (İHD) published its report on human rights violations in prisons for 2023. İHD reports at least 23,899 human rights violations for that year. İHD states in its report that the justice ministry hardly publishes data on political prisoners, foreign nationals, sick prisoners, deceased prisoners, LGBTIQ people, people with disabilities, young children and female prisoners. The annual report has therefore been compiled on the basis of individual information. The report also refers to the increasing number of prisons in Türkiye. A total of 19 new prisons were opened in 2023 and another twelve are planned for 2024.

The annual report focusses on the treatment of sick prisoners as a human rights violation, as some of them were not released despite being terminally ill. According to İHD, the forensic medical institute makes release decisions based on political bias, refuses to accept hospital reports and does not implement decisions or reports for so-called security reasons, worsening the situation for seriously ill prisoners.

The report also lists around 17,218 human rights violations under the heading of torture, including beatings, threats, disproportionate strip searches and insults. İHD also identified 2,246 violations of the right to correspondence. As of 02.05.24, a total of 13,819 women and 2,983 children were detained in Turkish prisons whose rights to healthcare and privacy were the most frequently violated. Problems in the prisons still include a lack of hygiene and cleaning products as well as access to hot and clean water. Cameras monitoring the women's living areas continue to violate

their privacy. According to the report, the cells are monitored 24 hours a day and some toilets and changing rooms are covered by the cameras' visual angles.³²

Tunisia / Libya

Tunisian-Libyan border crossing opens after three months of closure

Media report that the interior ministries of Tunisia and Libya have agreed to open the Ras Jedir border crossing as of 20.06.24. It had been closed since mid-March 2024 due to armed clashes on the Libyan side (cf. BN of 25.04.24).³³

Ukraine

Civilian victims and war refugees

Ukrainian interior minister Ihor Klymenko has informed that nine people were killed in a Russian missile attack on the city of Kryvyi Rih (Dnipropetrovsk region) on 12.06.24. Media reports of 14.06.24 say that one person was killed by Russian shelling in each of the Donetsk and Kherson regions. One civilian was also killed in the Russian-occupied part of Kherson region. According to the Russian state broadcaster NTV on 14.06.24 and the news portal News.ru on 16.06.24, one journalist from each of the media companies near the front line in the Donetsk region died in Ukrainian drone attacks. Media reports on 14.06.24 say that Russian attacks left two people dead, one in the city of Shostka (Sumy region) and another one in the Kherson region. The regional governor responsible informed on 15.06.24 that three people died following Russian shelling with cluster munitions in the Donetsk region.

Global Rights Compliance's lawyers, in cooperation with the Ukrainian government, have submitted an analytical report to the International Criminal Court alleging that the Russian side had used a "deliberate pattern of starvation tactics" during the 85-day siege of the city of Mariupol in 2022, which would constitute a war crime.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said his country had received "new and credible reports" that Russia had listed abducted Ukrainian children on Russian adoption websites. The return of Ukrainian children was to be prioritised at the Swiss peace conference at the request of the Ukrainian government. According to a statement by the governor of the Kherson region Oleksandr Prokudin, twelve children detained in Russian-occupied areas were able to return to Ukrainian-controlled parts of the country on 14.06.24.

The EU interior ministers have agreed to extend the unbureaucratic protection status for war refugees from Ukraine until 04.03.26.³⁴

War events and recruitment

Ukraine has created the new post of commander of the drone forces, appointing Vadym Sukharevskyi. Meanwhile, fierce fighting is taking place near the strategically important towns of Chasiv Yar and Pokrovsk in Donetsk region. On 12.06.24, Ukrainian lawmakers announced a bill that will allow companies to exempt their employees from military service by paying a monthly fee of \$500 per employee.

The Ukrainian border authorities have prevented a total of 20 conscripts from escaping at the borders with Moldova and Romania.³⁵

International conference venue on Ukraine

Shortly before the third reconstruction conference for Ukraine in Berlin, the head of the Ukrainian agency for reconstruction Mustafa Najem submitted his resignation. He complained that his agency was underfunded, and that excessive bureaucracy was artificially delaying reconstruction measures. Lastly, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal refused to allow him to attend the reconstruction conference. At the conference, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen spoke in favour of opening EU accession negotiations with Ukraine to start at the end of June 2024, as the country had fulfilled all agreed reform steps. President Zelensky appealed for support in rebuilding the severely damaged energy infrastructure. In a study, the Kiev School of Economics (KSE) put the total damage at USD 56.2 billion. According to German development minister Svenja Schulze, more than 100 agreements were signed at the conference, including memoranda of understanding between companies and governments, as well as agreements for alliances and initiatives. At the subsequent G7 summit in Italy, the participating countries agreed to finance a USD 50 billion loan package for the defence and reconstruction of Ukraine, using interest from frozen Russian state assets.

Ahead of the peace conference in Switzerland, President Putin formulated his conditions for peace talks. These included the withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from the four eastern regions claimed by Moscow and the abandonment of NATO membership aspirations. He said he was not seeking a temporary ceasefire, but a complete end to the conflict. The Ukrainian side rejected this attempt to influence the course of the conference as "absurd". In a joint final declaration at the Swiss peace conference, more than 80 countries and international organisations spoke out in favour of the territorial integrity of Ukraine. They also called for the restoration of Ukrainian control over the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and the ports on the shores of the Azov Sea. They further demanded the exchange of all war prisoners and the return of all "deported and illegally displaced" children to Ukraine. Some key states, among them Brazil, India and South Africa, did not endorse the final declaration.

Reuters news agency cited unnamed diplomats based in Beijing who said that China, which did not attend the conference in Switzerland, is pursuing an alternative plan for an international peace conference to be held "at a proper time that is recognised by both Russia and Ukraine, with equal participation of all parties and fair discussion of all peace plans". China is already lobbying for this approach, particularly among developing countries.³⁶

Venezuela

Hunger strikes in numerous prisons over poor detention conditions and delays in proceedings

On 09.06.24, prisoners in the states of Carabobo, Falcón and Miranda began a hunger strike due, among other things, to the precarious prison conditions and delays in proceedings. The NGOs Una Ventana a la Libertad and the Venezuelan Prison Observatory (OVP) have informed that many other detainees in prisons and police stations in 17 of the 23 states have joined the strike. Their demands include an improvement in precarious prison conditions, including a reduction of overcrowding, access to medical care and adequate food supplies, as well as an improvement in hygienic conditions. The prisoners also want proceedings to be speeded up, prisoners to be housed close to home and outstanding releases to be granted.

In the course of the strike, President Maduro initially dismissed the minister in charge of the penal system and appointed Julio García Zepa to this post on 11.06.24. Following an agreement with the relevant ministry as well as first releases and transfer of proceedings, the strike was ended between 13.06 and 14.06.24.

At the end of 2023, several prison raids had been carried out, including in Tocarón prison in Aragua, as part of the Liberación Gran Cacique Guaicaipuro security operation. According to the government, the aim of this operation was to dismantle criminal structures in prisons and restore the state's monopoly on the use of force. In this context, thousands of prisoners were transferred, in some cases to prisons far away, further exacerbating existing overcrowding. The whereabouts of key criminal gang leaders remain unclear, among them that of Héctor Guerrero Flores, alias Niño Guerrero, the official leader of the transnational Tren de Aragua gang, who had escaped from prison in Tocarón.³⁷

Yemen

Houthis: Several alleged spies arrested

On 10.06.24, the Houthi intelligence service informed about the arrest of several members of an alleged US-Israeli spy network, saying that they initially operated from the U.S. embassy in Sanaa and later from international organisations. The exact number of those arrested is not known, but it is apparently at least ten Yemeni nationals. The Houthis published video footage of them, purportedly showing confessions from the detainees.

Pressure on domestic political opponents has increased in recent months, with waves of arrests and convictions. Accusations of spying are a common reason given by the Houthis (cf. BN of 03.06.24 and 10.06.24).³⁸

Red Sea: Boat carrying migrants sunk

IOM has informed that on 10.06.24, a boat carrying around 260 people sank in the Gulf of Aden. On board were mainly people from Ethiopia and Somalia who were trying to reach the Yemeni mainland. At least 49 of them died and 140 others are still missing. The number of people fleeing from Somalia and Ethiopia towards Yemen is steadily increasing and more than tripled between 2021 and 2023. IOM currently estimates that there are around 380,000 migrants living in Yemen.³⁹

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Imprint

Published by

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge,
90461 Nürnberg,

ISSN

2943-0690

Valid as of

CW 25/2024

Printed by

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge

Design

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge

Reference source

Publikationsstelle Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
www.bamf.de/publikationen

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