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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Security situation

According to media reports, the city of Kabul experienced several explosions. Two are said to have occurred on 13.08.24 in police districts 16 and 17, a third one on 14.08.24 in the Kabul's Darul Aman district. There is no information about any victims or the background; the Taliban issued no official statement. The Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) has claimed responsibility for the attack in Kabul in the predominantly Shiite neighbourhood of Dasht-e Barchi on 11.08.24 (cf. BN of 12.08.24).¹

Governance and persecution: Third anniversary of the seizure of power

On 15.08.24, the Taliban celebrated the third anniversary of their takeover "as a victory over the Western occupiers". The largest ceremony took place at the former US military base in Bagram, north of Kabul. Home-made bombs, captured military vehicles and weapons were displayed at the parade. Another parade was held in the city of Kandahar in the presence of Emir Akhunzada. The Taliban government is still not officially recognised by any state in the world, but Chinese and Iranian diplomats and other foreign state guests were present – however, no Western diplomats.

Many citizens have defied the order to celebrate the anniversary. There were reports from several provinces (Panjshir, Khost, Takhar, Laghman, Ghazni and Kabul) that the Taliban had forced shopkeepers to display their flags and threatened them with serious consequences if they failed to do so. A shop owner from Khost was reportedly beaten up and arrested for this reason. In Kunduz province, no civilians are said to have taken part in the victory celebrations, apart from teachers and students who were forced to do so. In Bamiyan province, the Taliban forced around 3,000 students and 150 male school headmasters to take part in the celebrations and sing songs.

The London-based successor organisation to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, Rawadari, which was dissolved by the Taliban, has published a new semi-annual report on the human rights situation in the country. According to its report, at least 51 former government employees or their family members were injured or killed by the Taliban in the first half of 2024, despite the general amnesty. 35 people from this group were imprisoned indefinitely. In some cases, former government employees who returned to the country at the invitation of the Taliban were later killed. A further 131 civilians (e.g. tribal elders and clerics) suffered the same fate. It is said that the Taliban are not investigating these cases. According to media reports, a former police officer in the province of Bamiyan, who was the head of planning and operations for the Taliban police command there, was arrested by the Taliban. More checkpoints are said to have been set up on the province's main roads.²

Azerbaijan

Criticism from UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

Early parliamentary elections will be held on 01.09.24 to avoid a clash with the COP29 World Climate Change Conference to be held in Baku in November 2024. A press release from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor, dated 15.08.24, coincides with the election campaign that officially started on 09.08.24. In her report Lawlor expresses her concern about a "wave of arrests and criminal proceedings" that she has observed in recent months. She names a total of six human rights defenders and journalists, including employees of Abzas Media (cf. BN of 22.01.24). The UN Special Rapporteur speaks of "retaliation" for reports on human rights issues and corruption as well as for independent election monitoring or the exercise of freedom of expression.

According to media reports, the opposition parties are pursuing different strategies with a view to 01.09.24. While the Popular Front Party (Azərbaycan Xalq Cəbhəsi Partiyası, AXCP) is boycotting the election once again to avoid lending legitimacy to the election, the Müsavat Party will participate. Elections in Azerbaijan are generally considered unfair.³

Bangladesh

Student protests: Numerous resignations, transitional government has UN investigate deaths

According to media reports from 15.08.24, the new interim government under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohammad Yunus has decided to commission the International Crimes Tribunal for Bangladesh, which has been in existence since 2009, to investigate the deaths during the protests (cf. BN of 12.08.24) under UN-supervision. In the meantime, 15 charges (twelve of them for murder) have been filed against former Prime Minister Hasina and her political entourage in various courts across the country. There has been a nationwide wave of resignations from senior official positions and heads of educational institutions who were close to Hasina. Previously, the students had issued ultimatums to them; Yunus declared their subsequent resignations to be lawful. In a speech on 18.08.24, he also stated that Hasina had destroyed all of the country's institutions in her "dictatorial" endeavours to remain in power. The judicial system had been destroyed and democratic rights had been suppressed, he said. He promised to hold free and fair elections as soon as fundamental reforms would be completed and emphasised that the government was obliged to guarantee the security of all religious and ethnic minorities and their rights. This was aimed at both Hindus, many of whom are affiliated with the India-supported Awami League and some of whom have fled the country, and the Muslim Rohingyas (cf. BN of 12.08.24).⁴

Burkina Faso

Dozens killed in jihadist attack

Members of the al-Qaeda group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) killed more than 140 members of the Burkinabe military in an attack on a military convoy near the towns of Fada N'Gourma and Boungou in the eastern province of Gourma in the Est region on 09.08.24, according to their own statements published on 13.08.24. JNIM maintains that the attack is a response to several acts of violence committed by the military against civilians. According to media reports, JNIM also captured several vehicles, dozens of weapons, ammunition and military equipment. This attack caused the highest number of casualties that JNIM has claimed in Burkina Faso since the beginning of 2023.⁵

Forced recruitment of members of the judiciary

According to media reports of mid-August 2020, members of the Burkinabe military arrested six members of the judiciary in Ouagadougou and ordered them to support the fight against jihadist groups for a period of three months from 14.08.24. The administrative court of Bobo-Dioulasso ruled that the arrests and recruitment orders were unlawful.

Since Ibrahim Traoré took office in October 2022, members of the judiciary allegedly repeatedly criticised the military government and took decisions against people close to Traoré.⁶

Burundi

Journalist released from prison after early pardon

According to recent media reports, President Evariste Ndayishimiye pardoned journalist Floriane Irangabiye on 14.08.2024. She had been arrested and charged for endangering state security and collaborating with rebel movements in August 2022. In January 2023, she was sentenced to ten years in prison by the Supreme Court of Burundi in Bujumbura.⁷

Cameroon

Social media activist kidnapped from Gabon

HRW and the media report that Steve Akam, a social media activist known by his profile name Ramon Cotta, has been missing for around one month. On 17.07.24, Akam was allegedly abducted by unidentified persons in Gabon's capital Libreville, where he had been living for years, running a drinks stall at a market. A geolocalised video that appeared on social media shows Akam being handed over to the Cameroonian authorities at a border crossing between 19.07. and 21.07.24. No official statement from either country or information about Akam's whereabouts have been forthcoming. Opposition politician Maurice Kamto and a lawyers' collective have called for clarification. Akam had published TikTok videos criticising the government. According to a media report, the kidnapping could have been triggered by repeated criticism of the Cameroonian consulate in Gabon.

The authorities had just released Junior Ngombe, another social media activist, on bail on 31.07.24 (cf. BN of 12.08.24). According to HRW, a further increase in restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly has been observed recently in the wake of the upcoming elections in 2025 (and 2026, cf. BN of 22.07.24). In a press release dated 08.08.24, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, described the time leading up to the elections as an "opportunity to guarantee the free expression of political opinions for all". The press release also addresses other human rights challenges in the country.⁸

Chad

Deaths in floods

At least 54 people have died in floods triggered by heavy rains that affected the mostly desert-like province of Tibesti in the country's north. According to an agency report from 15.08.24, most of the victims are said to be gold panners who are not from the sparsely populated province.

In a press release dated 13.08.24, UN OCHA pointed out that around two months after the start of the current rainy season, over 716,000 people have been affected by torrential rain and flooding in West and Central Africa, including over 246,000 people in Chad within just a few weeks. The effects of floods, droughts and soil degradation exacerbated by climate change must be tackled proactively to avoid further consequences, especially for vulnerable people, UN OCHA said. In view of the humanitarian situation, the Minister of Public Health had already called for international aid for the country in mid-July 2024 (cf. BN of 22.07.24).⁹

Colombia

Guerrilla group enforces strike in Chocó with arms

On 11.08.24, the guerrilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) declared an indefinite armed strike in the southern half of the province of Chocó, along the San Juan, Sipí and Cajón rivers, after the agreed bilateral ceasefire between the ELN and the government expired on 03.08.24 (cf. BN of 05.08.24). The office of the state ombudsman reported that around 45,000 people were restricted in their mobility. Access to food, health and education services is limited. In a brochure published by the ELN it accuses the paramilitary Clan del Golfo, also known as the Gaitán Army of Colombia (EGC), of using civilian boats and ferries in collusion with security forces to occupy strategic positions along the San Juan River. According to Nubia Carolina Córdoba, Governor of Chocó, there is virtually no movement on the San Juan River, the main traffic artery of the rural communities. In addition, the illegal armed groups are said to have laid landmines.¹⁰

Democratic Republic of the Congo / Central Africa region

Mpox: WHO declares international health emergency

On 14.08.24, the WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern. The WHO had already done this once before in 2022. The emergency is due to the ongoing spread of a variant of the more dangerous endemic clade 1b of the Mpox-causing virus, particularly in the DR Congo. According to a report presented on 15.08.24, more than 15,600 potential Mpox infections and 548 deaths have been recorded in the DR Congo since the beginning of the year. The northern, eastern and central provinces have been particularly affected so far.

According to the report, Mpox (formerly monkeypox) is mainly characterised by skin rashes in the form of blisters. It is transmitted by close contact with infected persons or contaminated materials. Cases of the current variant have also been reported in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Congo (Republic of), Rwanda and Uganda. Vaccination against Mpox is possible. However, there is a major shortage of vaccines, tests and treatment in Africa.¹¹

Iran

Woman suffers gunshot wounds and serious injuries during suspected car seizure by police

According to media reports, a 31-year-old woman sustained serious injuries when the police fired at her car in the city of Noor (Mazandaran province) on 22.07.24.

With reference to human rights organisations, it was reported that seemingly her vehicle was to be confiscated due to violations of the Islamic dress code (hijab obligation). After the woman failed to comply with an impending police check, the police allegedly fired shots at the moving car. It is unclear whether the woman was wearing a headscarf when she was stopped by the police.

According to relatives of the woman, she was first taken to a local hospital and then transferred to the provincial capital of Sari for surgery of the lungs. A week later, she was taken to a police hospital in Tehran, where she is currently under guard but can receive short visits.¹²

Summons of well-known human rights lawyer for renewed detention

The human rights organisation Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) reported on 14.08.24 that the well-known lawyer and human rights activist Mohammad Seifzadeh is to be detained again.

The 76-year-old was summoned to Evin Prison in Tehran because he had signed a joint declaration by 45 activists against politically motivated executions addressed to the UN Secretary-General in December 2022. According to CHRI, he was accused of propaganda against the government and publishing lies, among other things. A corresponding conviction was confirmed by an appeals court in July 2023. The lawyer had already been imprisoned several times in the past, including five times during the reign of Shah Mohammad Pahlavi and eight times since the Islamic Republic was founded in 1979.¹³

Five activists sentenced to several years in prison

According to media reports from 13.08.24, five female activists campaigning for cultural, environmental and women's rights were sentenced to several years in prison.

The convictions are said to have been based on charges of assembly and conspiracy as well as propaganda against the Iranian government. The women had been arrested along with other activists in the city of Rasht (Gilan province) already in November 2023.¹⁴

Iraq

Death sentences imposed for drug offences

On 06.08.24, the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior announced that a total of 140 death sentences had been imposed for drug-related offences since the beginning of 2023.

According to Iraqi law, the import, export, cultivation and production of drugs can be punished with death. The death penalty applies to a number of other offences, including terrorism and murder.

According to Amnesty International, the death penalty had been executed in Iraq 17 times in 2021 and 11 times in 2022.¹⁵

Five arrests after missile attack on US base in Ain al-Assad

According to Iraqi security authorities, five suspects were arrested on 08.08.24 in connection with the missile attack on a US army airbase in Al-Anbar province on 05.08.24.

According to unconfirmed reports, five American military personnel and two external employees were injured in the missile attack.¹⁶

Turkish attack on PKK in Iraq

According to the Turkish Ministry of Defence, the Turkish military has attacked PKK positions in northern Iraq killing twelve suspected PKK members.¹⁷

Lebanon

At least ten dead in Israeli air strike on factory building

According to the state news agency NNA, ten civilians were killed by Israeli air strikes in the Lebanese city of Nabatieh on 17.08.24. Five others were injured. All are said to have been Syrian nationals. The Israeli army announced in a statement that it had attacked a Hezbollah arms depot.

According to the Lebanese authorities, this was the deadliest attack since the increase in armed clashes on the Lebanese-Israeli border between Hezbollah and Israel during the times of the Gaza war. Hezbollah attacked the Ayelet Hashahar kibbutz and a military base in northern Israel in retaliation for the Nabatieh attack. According to the Israeli army, two Israeli military personnel were injured in the attack.¹⁸

Libya

Twelve officers sentenced to long prison terms for dam bursts in Derna

On 28.07.24, twelve officials were sentenced to prison terms of between nine and 27 years for their role in managing the dams that were endangered by heavy rainfall in early September 2023, ultimately burst and severely flooded the eastern Libyan city of Derna (cf. BN of 25.09.23).¹⁹

Central bank suspends work due to the kidnapping of an employee

On 18.08.24, the Central Bank of Libya announced that it would cease operations until its kidnapped employee was released. In the morning of the same day, the head of the bank's information technology department had been kidnapped in front of his house by members of an unknown armed group. Other executives of the institution were threatened with kidnapping as well.

A week earlier, armed individuals had besieged the headquarters of the central bank in Tripoli. According to local media, the attackers had demanded the resignation of the head of the bank, al-Siddiq al-Kabir.²⁰

Myanmar

UN annual report: war crimes committed by parties to the conflict

According to the annual report of the Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar presented by the UN on 13.08.24, the military is committing an increasing number of war crimes, including torture and sexualised violence, to suppress armed resistance groups.

The report, which covers the period from 01.07.23 to 30.06.24, describes the armed conflict, which escalated at an alarming rate, as significant. The investigators claim to have found evidence of torture, sexual abuse and ill-treatment of children. Physical mutilations of prisoners, beheadings and the public display of disfigured corpses are reported. Air raids on schools, religious buildings and hospitals are also mentioned. In addition, thousands of people were arrested by the military junta and many of them were tortured or killed in custody, the report says. Specifically, people critical of the regime are arbitrarily detained and sentenced in blatantly unfair trials. Armed resistance groups are accused of war crimes as well.²¹

Nigeria

North-east: Numerous deaths due to Islamist violence

Islamist violence claimed over 100 lives in the state of Borno between 31.07. and 14.08.24. This is according to recent media reports on deadly incidents in the north-eastern state. According to the reports, at least 16 people were killed in a bomb attack attributed to Boko Haram on 31.07.24. It was the latest attack in a series of similar incidents.

At the beginning of August 2024, around 100 people were killed in clashes between rival Islamist groups in the Lake Chad region. These events continue an entire series of similar violent clashes in the same area in recent times that have turned deadly.

Furthermore, the armed forces killed a total of 14 Boko Haram members in several hideouts on 09.08.24. During these military operations an explosive device, firearms and drugs were seized.

Two people were killed and seven kidnapped on 10.08.24 in attacks allegedly carried out by Boko Haram along an important trunk road. Boko Haram uses kidnappings for the purpose of ransom extortion as a source of funding (cf. BN of 17.06.24). According to media reports based on official military sources, members of the armed forces killed five people during an anti-terrorist operation on 12.08.24. In a statement on 14.08.24, the military also announced that 44 Boko Haram members and their families had surrendered. Similar incidents were also reported in July 2024 (cf. BN of 29.07.24).

According to media reports, the activities of the Islamist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in north-eastern Nigeria and in parts of the neighbouring states of Cameroon, Niger and Chad are the cause of a humanitarian disaster. Over 35,000 people have been killed and millions displaced.

Hardly a day goes by without acts of violence being attributed to Islamist groups. This is particularly true in the north-east, with the state of Borno being affected worst. Often incidents also go unreported.²²

Pakistan

Punjab: Member of the Ahmadiyya community shot dead

On 27.07.24, according to media reports, a member of the Ahmadiyya community in Lala Musa in the district of Gujrat in Punjab province was shot dead by unknown perpetrators in his doctor's surgery. Ever since the Supreme Court released an Ahmadi on bail in a blasphemy trial in February 2024, hostile campaigns against the religious minority have been on the rise. Representatives of the community complain that the government is doing little to combat the hostile climate created against them.²³

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Security situation

According to a spokesperson for the Afghan Taliban government, three Afghan civilians, a woman and two children, were killed by shots fired by Pakistani security forces near the Torkham border crossing on 12.08.24. The Pakistani forces had opened fire on Afghan security forces. The Pakistani government did not comment on the incident.

On 16.08.24, five people, including two soldiers, were injured in an explosion near Peshawar and a police vehicle was damaged. No one claimed responsibility for the attack. Six people were arrested in connection with the incident. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, recently experienced a spate of deadly attacks, some of which have been claimed by the Pakistani Taliban and their affiliated groups.²⁴

Palestinian Territories / Israel

Gaza Strip: current developments; humanitarian situation

The Hamas-led Ministry of Health stated on 15.08.24 that more than 40,000 Palestinians had been killed and 92,401 others wounded in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war. The ministry does not officially distinguish between combatants and civilians. According to Israeli figures, 17,000 Hamas fighters have been eliminated. None of this information can be independently verified.

The fighting in the Gaza Strip continues with rockets being fired from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. On 10.08.24 a school in Gaza City, which served as a shelter for internally displaced persons, was hit. Local health

authorities reported at least 80 dead and 50 others injured. The Israeli military stated that the target had been a Hamas command centre in a mosque on the site. Nineteen members of Hamas and the so-called Islamic Jihad in Palestine are said to have been killed. A high-ranking member of Hamas denied that there were any fighters in the school.

On 13.08.24 and 15.08.24, the Israeli military issued evacuation orders for areas that had already previously been affected by such measures. A further evacuation order followed on 16.08.24, which included areas in Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis, among them one that was part of the previously declared al-Mawasi humanitarian zone. Hamas is said to have previously fired mortar shells and rockets from these areas. According to UN OCHA, the zone has shrunk to 41 km² or 11% of the territory in the Gaza Strip. A total of eight evacuation orders are said to have been issued in August 2024.

According to UN figures, the volume of humanitarian aid in the months of May to July 2024 has allegedly dropped by around 61% compared to the months of January to April 2024 (from around 94 lorries a day to around 37). Nevertheless, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) stated in a report that more food had been imported in July 2024 (79,082 to 86,925 tonnes) than in June 2024 (47,443 - 61,530 tonnes). According to the report, this was due to an increase in commercial imports, while humanitarian aid declined. Humanitarian aid is at its lowest level since 2023, and especially families with low purchasing power can only benefit from the increase in food imports to a limited extent. The report points to methodological challenges that may distort the picture presented. The first confirmed case of polio has been reported. The WHO had already been warning for weeks of the imminent spread of polio, which often caused by contaminated water. A ceasefire of at least seven days is necessary for effective prevention. Polio is not yet curable but was eradicated 25 years ago through immunisation in the Gaza Strip. Due to the outbreak of war, however, only 86% of the current population has been immunised (previously 99%).²⁵

West Bank: Dead and wounded in armed clashes and attacks

On 11.08.24, an Israeli civilian was shot dead from a passing car in the West Bank and another person was injured. Hamas claimed that this was an act of retaliation following air strikes on a school in the Gaza Strip, which the Israeli military justified with Hamas command structures present there.

On 17.08.24, two senior Hamas members were killed in an Israeli air strike on their car in Jenin, in the north of the West Bank. According to a statement by Israeli authorities, the two were involved in the previous attack. On the same day, the al-Qassam Brigade, the armed wing of Hamas, claimed to have killed a member of the Israeli military. The military announced on 12.08.24 that a Hamas member who had opened fire on an Israeli civilian, thereby wounding him, near the village of Qalqilya, had been shot dead. Two other Palestinians were wounded in the attack. On 13.08.24, a Palestinian was shot dead by the Israeli military after allegedly throwing stones at military personnel who were demolishing the house of a militia member who had been the author of a deadly attack.

Five Palestinians were killed in a military raid in Tubas and a drone attack in Tamoun on 14.08.24. The man killed in Tubas is said to have been a member of Hamas.

A Palestinian was killed and several other people were seriously injured in an attack by Israeli settlers in the West Bank on the Arab village of Jit on 15.08.24. More than a hundred masked people are said to have entered the village, opened fire on Palestinians, set fire to houses and damaged cars and water tanks. Residents stated that it took two hours for the military to arrive on the scene to bring the situation under control. One person was taken into custody the same evening and further prosecution measures were announced.

According to media reports, the UN stated that it had documented 1,000 attacks by settlers in the West Bank in the first nine months since Hamas attacked Israeli territory and the war in the Gaza Strip began. This corresponds to an average of four attacks per day.²⁶

Senegal

Protests by media companies

Media professionals from several Senegalese media companies did not publish any news on 13.08.24 to protest against what they consider a curtailment of press freedom in the country and to send a signal against the government's fiscal and economic measures. According to media reports, the television stations TFM, ITV and 7 TV, several radio stations and daily newspapers did not broadcast any news that day. Content-free editions of

several newspapers are said to have shown a black cover page with the words "journée sans presse" and a picture of three raised fists. The reports say that several media companies accuse the current government under President Faye of confiscating their financial resources because they allegedly did not pay taxes. At the end of June 2024, Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko criticised the misappropriation of public funds, which he claimed had been committed by several media company executives. In a statement published on 06.08.24, the Coordination des associations de la presse (CAP) in Senegal warned of the closure of press companies and the loss of dozens of jobs due to pressure from the government, consisting of tax controls and reminders to pay fees. Two of the country's daily sports newspapers, Stades and Sunu Lamb, are said to have ceased publication in August 2024 after more than 20 years. From 2021 to 2024, Senegal slipped from 49th to 94th place on the World Press Freedom Index published by the organisation Reporters Without Borders.²⁷

Sudan

Ongoing battles

According to media reports, units of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia attacked a village on the western bank of the Blue Nile in the state of Sennar last week. More than 100 civilians were killed in the attack. The cause of the escalation was an attempt by some RSF fighters to abduct women and girls, which male villagers prevented. A few hours after the incident, reinforced RSF forces returned to the village and opened fire indiscriminately.

According to further media reports, RSF forces attacked several villages in the states of Sennar and El Gezira on 16.08.24, forcing some of the residents to flee and looting their homes. In other cases, the residents were prevented from fleeing and the wounded were not treated. In total, almost 30 people lost their lives.

On 17.08.24, members of the resistance committees from North Karthum reported the bombing of a residential neighbourhood in this area of the city by the Sudanese army (SAF). Nine people were killed.²⁸

Negotiations to end the talks and humanitarian situation

The talks in Geneva initiated by the US took place on 14.08.24 without the participation of representatives of the SAF (cf. BN of 29.07. and 05.08.24). According to the US special envoy for Sudan, the three-day talks between the RSF and the delegations from Egypt and Saudi Arabia were nevertheless very positive. Despite the boycott by the SAF, they were in constant contact with both parties and were thus able to mediate.

On 15.08.24, the transitional military government announced that the border crossing with Chad near the town of Adré would be opened for humanitarian supplies for three months. The process would be coordinated and organised in cooperation with Qatar.²⁹

Syria

North-east: Fighting in Deir ez-Zor

On 12.08.24, fighters from the Deir ez-Zor Military Council attacked three locations of pro-government troops. Allegedly, 18 pro-government fighters died during this incident. The military council, which belongs to the US-backed Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that control areas in the country's north-east, described the attack as an act of retaliation after numerous civilians had previously been killed in attacks by pro-government troops along the internal Syrian border between the areas controlled by different parties (cf. BN of 12.08.24). According to reports, farmers were denied access to their fields in the affected areas, even after the clashes had subsided.

The SDF, who had cut off the supply lines to the government-controlled "security zones" in the otherwise SDF-controlled towns of Hasaka and Qamishli due to the attacks, ended the siege and allowed the transport of food and water.³⁰

Hama: One dead and dozens injured after earthquake

An earthquake of a magnitude of between 4.8 and 5.5. caused dozens of minor to moderate injuries and one suspected death on the evening of 12.08.24. Aftershocks continued into the morning hours of the next day.

However, there were no reports of major damage. In the north-west, which was hit by devastating earthquakes in February 2023, no damage was reported according to the local civil defence, also known as the White Helmets.³¹

North-west: Extension of cross-border aid

On 12.08.24, the UN announced that the Syrian government had extended the UN's authorisation to use the two border crossings Bab al-Salama and al-Rai. The two border crossings in the north-west of the country, which allow the import of aid from Türkiye into opposition-controlled areas, have been used for cross-border aid since the strong earthquakes shook the region in February 2023. However, the UN once again pointed out that only 24% of the funding needed to provide sufficient humanitarian aid for the increased overall needs in Syria has been secured so far.³²

Tanzania

Mass arrest of opposition members

On 12.08.24, hundreds of supporters and leaders of the Tanzanian opposition Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) were reportedly arrested ahead of a party meeting in Mbeya. The police banned the rally on the grounds that it was aimed at violence. Among the approximately 520 people arrested across the country was the party chairman Freeman Mbowe. He had been on his way to meet the deputy chairman Tindu Lissu, who had already been taken into custody on 11.08.24. On 13.08.24, Mbowe, Lissu and other party members were transferred to Dar es Salaam and released on bail. According to official information, some people remain in custody who do not meet the conditions for bail. Mbowe and Lissu as well as other opposition members have already been detained several times (cf. BN of 11.09.23 and 09.08.21).

Regular presidential and parliamentary elections are due at the end of 2026, and human rights groups fear further mass arrests and repressive policies by the current government under Samia Suluhu Hassan.³³

Türkiye

Suspected arrest and ill-treatment of six Kurdish youths

According to media reports, six Kurdish teenagers were arrested by the police in the city of Yüksekova in the province of Hakkari on 31.07.24. The youths told media representatives that they were mistreated by the police and kept in custody until 03:30 in the morning. According to their own statements, the youths were arrested because they had resisted the arrest of a friend during an identity check. They said they had been repeatedly hit on the head and insulted by police officers when they were questioned in a police car. One of the youths told a daily newspaper that he had been abandoned on a bypass road outside Yüksekova. After returning home, he went to the hospital and received a medical report documenting the assault.

According to press reports, the families and lawyers of the young people contacted the local police headquarters on the day of the arrest. They were told that the young people were not there and that there were no citizens at the station who had been arrested by police units.

According to media reports, three members of parliament from the Peoples' Emancipation and Democracy Party (DEM) submitted a parliamentary question to the government about the allegations on 01.08.24. The question pointed out that the young people had been left several kilometres outside the city with bloodstained clothing. The question further stressed that the youths' claim that they were taken away by the police, abused in a police car and not taken to a police station, indicated that legal procedures for arrests had not been followed.

On 02.08.24, the local branch of the DEM in Yüksekova organised a rally against the alleged police violence. One of the three DEM deputies stated at the rally that the ill-treatment of two youths had been confirmed by medical reports. However, according to him, the Ministry of the Interior and the Governor's Office stated that they had not been informed about the matter and that the police had not taken any such measures.³⁴

Ukraine

Civilian victims

According to media reports from 14.08.24, a civilian was killed by Russian fire in the Sumy region. The regional authorities said on 15.08.24 that one person was killed by a Russian drone attack in the Kharkiv region. On 15.08.24, the media reported that two people died as a result of Russian attacks in the Kharkiv region, one in the Donetsk region and two in the Kherson region. According to Russian media reports from 16.08.24, at least two people were killed in a Ukrainian attack in Donetsk.³⁵

War effort and corruption in recruitment centres

According to media reports, the heaviest fighting is still taking place in the Donetsk region, with Russian troops advancing towards Pokrovsk. The authorities have called on the population of Pokrovsk to leave the city. The Ukrainian General Staff has also temporarily restricted the movement of the population of parts of the Sumy region within a radius of twenty kilometres due to potential Russian sabotage and reconnaissance operations. According to the governor's statement of 12.08.24, the number of Russian attacks with guided bombs on the Kharkiv region had decreased significantly in the previous days. Nevertheless, a stricter curfew is planned for around 100 settlements in the border area due to Russian attacks. Overall, according to Ukrainian military information, the main front in Ukraine has not been relieved despite the Ukrainian advance on Russian territory.

President Zelenskyi describes the Ukrainian offensive in the Russian region of Kursk as a security measure, as the Ukrainian border region of Sumy has been repeatedly attacked from there. According to Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko, the operation is intended to create a buffer zone to protect the Ukrainian border region. Presidential adviser Mychajlo Podoljak explained that Moscow must be forced to participate in a peace summit, as it will not do so voluntarily. The Foreign Ministry stated that Kyiv is not interested in "taking over" Russian territory. The Ukrainian offensive would stop if the Russian side agreed to "restore a just peace". Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk assured that Ukraine would open humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of civilians to both the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

The heads of two recruitment centres near Kyiv were arrested for accepting approximately USD 1 million in bribes for the exemption of conscripts. At least 20 recruits were declared unfit for military service on the basis of falsified medical reports.³⁶

Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and corruption in the energy ministry

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on 17.08.24, the safety of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant has once again been jeopardised. The Russian plant management reported a Ukrainian drone attack on an access road to the nuclear power plant and spoke of a threat to personnel. The accusation has not yet been independently verified.

According to a statement by the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office on 12.08.24, one of the four deputy energy ministers and other suspects were arrested on suspicion of corruption when they accepted a USD 500,000 bribe for smuggling mining equipment from a state coal mining company in the combat zone in the Donetsk region. The newspaper Ukrainska Pravda identified the alleged main perpetrator as Oleksandr Chejlo.³⁷

Judgement

According to a statement issued by the Russian General Prosecutor's Office on 15.08.24, a court in the Russian-occupied Kherson region has sentenced a Ukrainian citizen to ten and a half years in prison for spying for the Ukrainian military. The woman, who allegedly helped Ukrainian civilians to leave the Russian-occupied territories, has already been in Russian custody for over two years.³⁸

Ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

According to a statement from the President's Office on 15.08.24, President Zelensky introduced a bill on ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its amendments to parliament. Ukraine already signed the statute in 2000 but has not yet ratified it.³⁹

Venezuela

Current situation: further protests, repression, arrests and disappearances

On 17.08.24, the opposition once again called for protests against the results of the presidential election published by the Supreme Electoral Council (CNE). In the aftermath, images of protests not only in Venezuela, but also from various cities around the world were shared on social media.

The number of arrests has continued to rise. According to the NGO Foro Penal, more than 1,500 arrests were verified by name between 29.07. and 18.08.24, and 90 people were released. The Attorney General's Office speaks of over 2,400 arrests and 25 deaths. According to one of the directors of Foro Penal, the mass arrests on the first days of the protests were specifically meant to intimidate the population in order to curb further demonstrations. An analyst from the International Crisis Group is quoted in a media report as saying that the repression was arbitrary and left people in fear. According to him, people had the impression that the police had to fulfil a quota and that arrests could therefore affect anyone.

Based on relatives' testimony to the media, they reported that numerous people who were only in the vicinity of protests were also arbitrarily arrested. Quite often relatives were not informed which prisons the detainees were being taken to. Most recently, there have also been reports of prisoners being transferred to Tocuyito prison without relatives being informed in advance. The Civil Society Monitoring Centre for Prisons (OVP) recently drew particular attention to the precarious situation of women in detention.

According to Foro Penal, there were also numerous selective arrests of members of the political opposition as well as of election witnesses and the like. People who had been identified as protest participants by their neighbours or in video footage of protests had also been arrested, Foro Penal said. Furthermore, a Foro Penal lawyer who had worked for political prisoners, was arrested.

In addition, there are still cases of arbitrary disappearances. According to his son, the former member of parliament Williams Dávila (Acción Democrática) was admitted to hospital in critical condition on 13.08.24, after having been taken to an unknown location by masked people dressed in black on 08.08.24 after a vigil.

To illustrate the repression, the NGO Provea drew attention to the particularly high number of arrests compared to previous protests in 2014, 2017 and 2019. In addition, several media reported on the cancellation of passport documents, e.g. for politicians and NGO employees.

However, the top military leadership remains firmly on the side of the incumbent Maduro, recently further promotions had been announced. There have been individual reports that also Cuban security forces were involved in post-election raids. However, this could not be independently verified.⁴⁰

NGO regulation and financing law (so-called Ley Anti-ONG) passed

On 15.08.24, the National Assembly, which is dominated by the ruling party, passed the outstanding articles of the law on the inspection, regulation, activities and financing of non-governmental organisations and similar organisations (cf. BN of 30.01.23) in the second reading, following their postponement in May 2024. The 39 articles of the corresponding law regulate, among other things, registration and verification obligations regarding employees and members as well as the financing of the respective organisations. For example, NGOs may not receive donations from political parties or use donations for political purposes and must state whether their donors come from Venezuela or abroad. Supporting activities that are directed against Venezuela's national stability or institutions is also prohibited. Organisations that promote "fascism, intolerance or hatred on racial, ethnic, religious, political, social, ideological or gender-specific grounds" cannot be registered. Infringements could result in substantial fines or even dissolution. NGOs criticised this law as a further restriction of civil society's freedom of action and a sword of Damocles, which is intended to silence criticism of the government and enable the criminalisation of human rights work.⁴¹

Publication of Carter Centre and UN election reports, international criticism and mediation attempts

The Carter Center, which was one of the few organisations authorised to observe elections in the country, had already published a press release on 30.07.24 which included the statement that the presidential elections did not meet "international standards for the integrity of elections", that there had been numerous irregularities and restrictions in the run-up to the elections and a lack of transparency in the publication of the itemised election results. In addition, the Carter Centre was unable to find any evidence of an alleged hacker attack which, according to the government, had disrupted the transmission of the election results. A preliminary report on the elections by

a four-member UN panel of experts, which was initially intended to remain internal, but was then published on 13.08.24, also pointed out that the continued failure to publish the results in an itemised form was an "unprecedented event" and supported the information on the lack of transparency and integrity provided by the Carter Center's results. The committee had also received no explanation why the electronic transmission of results from the polling stations to the centre had suddenly been stopped, it said. In addition, a random check of the results uploaded by the opposition for each polling station showed that they had the necessary authenticity features (including QR codes, signatures). Shortly after the publication, the Public Prosecutor General's Office launched an investigation into the web administrators for allegedly falsifying the results. The speaker of parliament and Maduro confidant Jorge Rodríguez recently rejected the UN election panel's report, criticised its uncoordinated publication and proposed a new regulation for international election observation that would no longer allow external observers in Venezuela in future.

In a joint declaration 22 states and the EU once again called for the publication of the results broken down by polling station and criticised the repression and violence in the aftermath of the elections. Colombia and Brazil continue to try to mediate. Brazilian President Lula recently proposed new elections, which both the government and the opposition rejected.⁴²

Yemen

Houthi militia storms UN human rights offices

According to the UN Human Rights Office in Geneva on 13.08.24, Houthi militia fighters stormed their offices in the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa on 03.08.24 forcing the employees to hand over documents, vehicles and other types of equipment.

The Houthi fighters are also said to have kidnapped 13 UN employees and more than 50 employees of other aid organisations as well as some embassy staff, who have been held in incommunicado detention ever since. The Houthis accuse the UN of espionage.⁴³

Humanitarian situation: food and health

According to a report dated 18.08.24 by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Yemen working group, which international aid actors use as a source for a standardised scale of information on food security, nutrition and other livelihoods, acute malnutrition is rapidly increasing in areas under the control of the internationally recognised government.

Children under the age of five are particularly affected. In this age group, malnutrition increased by 34% against the previous year. The poor economic situation, limited access to clean drinking water and the widespread outbreak of infectious diseases (especially measles and cholera) are cited as the main causes. Pregnant and breastfeeding women are also severely affected by malnutrition.

The IPC's most serious classification, level 5: extremely critical acute malnutrition, has now been reached for the first time in parts of Hodeida and Taizz.⁴⁴

Flooding in Hodeida, Taizz and Hajja

On 08.08.24, the governor of Hodeida announced that a total of 30 people had died in heavy rainfall on 07.08.24 and that several hundred more had lost their homes.

On 02.08.24, 15 people died in the Taizz governorate because of flooding caused by heavy rainfall. The city of Hajja was also affected, but to an unknown extent.⁴⁵

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