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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Governance

The Taliban government announced that it will not recognise documents and consular services such as passport issuance, passport renewal stickers, visa stickers and other services provided by Afghan diplomatic missions in Western countries and cities (including London, Belgium, Berlin, Bonn, Switzerland, Austria, France, Italy, Canada and Australia). The Taliban have called on Afghan citizens living abroad and foreign nationals to apply for the necessary documents at Afghan diplomatic missions controlled by them in other countries. Since taking power in 2021, the Taliban have not managed to take control of all diplomatic missions worldwide - especially not in Western countries. Currently, the foreign missions in these countries are still run by diplomats appointed by the previous government of the republic. However, these missions have announced that they will continue to provide services to Afghan citizens.¹

Persecution situation

According to a new report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 25 civilians were killed and 43 injured across the country between 01.04. and 30.06.24 - mostly as a result of attacks by the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP). Furthermore, 60 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention of former government employees and soldiers were registered.²

Bangladesh

Ongoing student protests against quota system, flight and resignation of the government

On 04.08.24, protests against a quota system for the allocation of jobs in the public sector (cf. BN of 22.07. and 29.07.24) once again caused protesters and the police to clash violently across the country. In the process, 97 people were killed (including 14 law enforcement officers). The students had demanded the resignation of the government. The city of Sirajganj, north-west of Dhaka, registered the highest number of fatalities, at least 22 people, including 13 police officers, were killed. In the city of Narsingdi, six leaders of the ruling Awami League were beaten to death after opening fire on protesters. The government imposed an indefinite curfew on Sunday evening and ordered mobile phone operators to suspend 4G services again - although broadband internet will remain available. The protesters called for a nationwide "March to Dhaka" on 05.08.24.

The Awami League-led 14-party alliance under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina blamed the opposition Islamist party Jamiat-e Islami and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, for the violence during the protests and thus banned both organisations. During the war of independence in Bangladesh in 1971, Jamiat-e Islami had fought on Pakistan's side against the Awami League and tried to prevent the secession of Bangladesh.

According to media reports, protesters stormed the prime minister's official residence on 05.08.24. According to the military, she is said to have resigned and left the country, and therefore, an interim government is to be formed.³

Benin

North: Fatal attack in national park

On 24.07.24, unknown persons killed at least twelve people in a large national park in northern Benin. According to media reports, seven of the victims were military personnel and five were rangers. The incident took place near the border with Niger not far from the Mékrou River. Observers of the security situation in the region harbour fears that Islamist groups from the Sahel countries are in the process of turning the national parks in northern Benin into a base for infiltrating other West African countries. Violent extremist endeavours, smuggling and other illegal activities in Benin's north are interrelated (cf. BN of 25.09.23).⁴

Colombia

Ceasefire agreement with ELN expired

On 03.08.24, the bilateral ceasefire agreed between the guerrilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the government expired. The ceasefire had been initially agreed for six months in August 2023 and was extended for a further six months in February 2024. A few hours earlier, the UN and the Colombian Bishops' Conference proposed an extension of a few weeks to gain time for further talks. The government delegation initially agreed to the proposal to allow the negotiating partners to meet. However, representatives of the ELN made the extension conditional upon its removal from the list of organised armed groups (GAO) by presidential decree and the recognition of the ELN's political nature. While both parties express their willingness to engage in a peace dialogue, they accuse each other of not honouring the agreements made.⁵

Cuba

OCDH study: 89% of the population living in extreme poverty

The NGO Observatorio Cubano de Derechos Humanos (OCDH) conducted more than 1,000 interviews in 78 Cuban communities and concluded that the supply of basic goods, such as food and medicine, is severely limited and that 89% of Cubans are living in extreme poverty. Seven out of ten interviewees stated that they had gone without breakfast, lunch or dinner due to a lack of money or a shortage of food. Only 15% were able to eat three meals a day regularly. According to the study, the age group most affected is the over-70s. The study says that 38% of them are unable to obtain medication due to the cost or lack of it. In addition to the food crisis, the study also cites power cuts, the high cost of living, low wages, corruption and deteriorating public health as the main concerns.⁶

Democratic Republic of the Congo

M23: Ceasefire agreed

Following mediation by Angola, on 30.07.24, the DR Congo and Rwanda agreed a ceasefire in the conflict between the Rwandan-backed rebel group Mouvement 23 Mars (M23) and the Congolese security forces. The conflict, which broke out at the end of 2021 and is concentrated in the province of North Kivu, continues to claim civilian lives and has displaced around 1.7 million people (cf. BN of 29.01., 19.02., 11.03. and 15.04.24). According to reports, the indefinite ceasefire shall enter into force on 04.08.24. No further details are known, the reports said. An analyst from the International Crisis Group (ICG) expressed scepticism about the durability of the ceasefire, for one, because the public communiqué did not explicitly name M23. Previously, two consecutive humanitarian ceasefires of two weeks each had been partially ignored. The first ceasefire, which began on 05.07.24, had been announced by the US.

According to further reports, on the first day of the ceasefire, M23 took control of the town of Ishasha on the border with Uganda without a fight after the Congolese army and the self-defence groups allied with it, known as Wazalendo, had withdrawn. In Kinshasa, 26 people allegedly linked to M23 are currently being tried, most of them in absentia. They are accused of war crimes, participation in an insurgency and treason. On 29.07.24, the public prosecutor's office demanded the death penalty in 25 cases. The former chairman of the electoral commission

(CÉNI) Corneille Nangaa is one of the absent defendants. On 15.12.23, he had announced the founding of the political-military alliance Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC) from Kenya, which M23 had also joined, reports said.⁷

Guinea

Verdict in the stadium massacre trial

After almost two years of court proceedings in the case of the stadium massacre against eleven defendants (cf. BN of 10.10.22 and 10.07.23), the verdicts were handed down on 31.07.24. On 28.09.09, security forces attacked an opposition event in the stadium in Conakry; at least 156 people were killed, 109 women were raped and numerous other people were injured. According to media reports, eight defendants were found guilty, including the then head of the junta, Moussa Dadis Camara, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison. He is said to have given the order to suppress the event. The same sentence was imposed on Moussa Tiégboro Camara, then head of the police. However, Claude Pivi, who escaped from prison, was sentenced to life imprisonment (cf. BN of 06.11. and 13.11. 23) and is still on the run. Other defendants received prison sentences of between ten and 18 years. The remaining defendants were acquitted for lack of evidence. The court also awarded high monetary compensation to the rape victims and their surviving dependants, the reports said.

It is reported that human rights organisations and the UN welcomed the verdict as an important symbol in the fight against impunity. Camara, who like the other defendants had pleaded not guilty and complained of a conspiracy against him, appealed against the judgement through his lawyer. Camara, who comes from Forested Guinea, is said to still enjoy the support of the army.⁸

Iran

Arrests after killing of Hamas leader Haniyeh

According to media reports, Iranian security forces arrested more than two dozen people on 03.08.24, among them high-ranking military and intelligence officials as well as employees of a guest house run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), after Ismail Haniyeh, the chairman of Hamas' politburo, was killed in the same guest house in Tehran on 31.07.24. The suspected assassination happened despite increased security precautions occasioned by President Masud Pezeshkian's inauguration on 30.07.24. According to press reports, the authorities are investigating the suspicion of potential leaks within their own structures. Research by an international daily newspaper indicates that the Israeli foreign intelligence service Mossad allegedly hired members of the IRGC. In addition, a special IRGC unit is leading the investigation and has the task of identifying those responsible. Iranian security forces and Hamas accuse Israel of carrying out the killing, however, Israel has not yet commented on the allegations and has neither confirmed nor denied its involvement.⁹

Arrest of artist

According to press reports, security forces arrested Zara Esmaeili on 25.07.24. Esmaeili is an artist living in Tehran whose videos went viral. They show her singing and dancing in public without a hijab, violating several regulations. Since her arrest, there has been no information about Esmaeili's whereabouts or her condition.¹⁰

Iraq

Discussions about amnesty and personal status laws

Several controversial legislative proposals are currently dominating the political debate in Iraq. One of these proposals intends to narrow the definition of the crime of supporting a terrorist organisation within the scope of extending the general amnesty law. This would benefit many Sunni Iraqis suspected of having supported IS.

There is considerable opposition, especially from female members of parliament and citizens, to an amendment to the 1959 Personal Status Law. The proposed amendments would generally allow Iraqis to regulate marriage matters according to Shiite religious law. Depending on interpretation and context, this would mean that marriage is possible from the age of 15 for boys and in some cases even from the age of nine for girls. Critics speak of a step backwards in terms of women's rights in Iraq.¹¹

Turkish airstrikes on PKK in the KR-I

On 03.08.24, the Turkish military announced that eight PKK fighters had been killed in air strikes the previous day. The strikes were heavily criticised by Baghdad.¹²

Lebanon

Situation at the Lebanese-Israeli border region

Hezbollah and the Israeli army continue to exchange fire on a regular basis.

On 30.07.24, an Israeli air strike targeted a building in a Hezbollah-controlled Beirut suburb. In addition to several dozen injured people, three people died, among them, Fouad Shukr, a senior member of Hezbollah, whom Israel holds responsible for the rocket strike on the Golan that killed twelve children and young people on 27.08.24, died (cf. BN of 29.07.24).

At Shukr's funeral on 01.08.24, the Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, spoke and announced a "new phase" in the war between Israel and Hezbollah. In the context of the targeted killing of Ismael Haniyeh, chairman of the Hamas politburo, in Tehran on 31.07.24, a major coordinated counter-reaction by Hezbollah and other allied militias is generally expected. Meanwhile, various countries (including the US, France, the United Kingdom, Japan, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia) have called on their nationals to leave Lebanon.

By now, at least 547 people have been reported dead on the Lebanese side, including at least 115 civilians; the figures for the Israeli side are 22 soldiers and 24 civilians.¹³

Liberia

Draft law to further criminalise homosexuality

On 18.07.24, a member of the House of Representatives in Monrovia presented a bill entitled "Anti-Homosexuality Law of Liberia 2024" to further criminalise homosexuality. According to media reports, the bill provides for same-sex sexual acts to be punishable by up to life imprisonment and fines. The introduction of the bill was prompted by an article published by the online news agency Public Trust, which allegedly encouraged the spread of homosexuality. The objective is the preservation of Liberia's cultural heritage by having a harsher law, the reports say.

If the bill is adopted, Chapter 14 of the Liberian Penal Code of 1976 will be amended. Until now, same-sex sexual acts between adults have been punishable by up to one year in prison. The draft law also provides for prison sentences for same-sex sexual acts between minors. It is also aimed at media professionals who report on LGBTIQ people. According to the draft law, they can be punished with up to 20 years in prison and media organisations with a fine of LRD 1 million (approx. EUR 4,600, as of 05.08.24) as well as the (temporary) suspension of accreditation.¹⁴

Myanmar

State of emergency extended by a further six months

On 31.07.24, three and a half years after its coup on 01.02.21, the military junta extended the state of emergency by a further six months until 31.01.25. In an official statement, the generals justified this step with the unstable situation and the ongoing unrest in the country. Parliamentary elections are postponed again. In various parts of the country, ethnic groups, some of which have close ties to neighbouring China, are fighting against the military (cf. BN of 29.07.24), which has already lost control over many parts of the country.¹⁵

Nigeria

Deaths at protests

At least seven protesters have died during protest rallies in the states of Kaduna and Kano since 01.08.24. According to media reports, Nigerian security forces have since arrested over 700 people who gathered in many places in Nigeria to protest against the high cost of living and poor governance. Civil society groups, among others, are said

to have called for ten days of protests under the slogan #EndBadGovernance. The police have used tear gas in several cities and reserve the right to call in the military for support. In the northern city of Kano, in the state of the same name, a government office was attacked and looted. Nigeria is experiencing an economic crisis with high inflation. Many blame the sharp rise in the cost of living on the economic reforms initiated by President Bola Tinubu in 2023. The doubling of fuel prices, rising food and transport costs and a significant increase in the price of imported goods are seen as the consequences of these reforms (cf. BN of 10.06.24). In a speech on 12.06.24, Tinubu made it clear that the economic reforms will be continued despite the difficulties they cause for large parts of the population (cf. BN of 24.06.24). Curfews are in force in several federal states.¹⁶

New minimum wage law signed

According to media reports, President Bola Tinubu signed a law on 29.07.24 that provides for a monthly minimum wage of NGN 70,000 (approx. EUR 39; as of 02.08.24) nationwide. On 04.06.24, Nigeria's most important trade unions suspended a nationwide strike that had begun the day before to negotiate an increase in the state-imposed minimum wage (cf. BN of 10.06.24).¹⁷

Pakistan

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Tribal feud in Kurram district claims more victims

The death toll in tribal clashes in the Kurram district has risen to 49 people (cf. BN of 29.07.24). More than 200 people were injured in the armed conflict that continued for several days. The provincial government and the local security authorities, which have been criticised ever since, were incapable of ending the conflict and restoring public order until 30.07.24. The clashes between Sunni and Shiite tribes from Boshera and Mali Khel broke out on 24.07.24 over an old land dispute.¹⁸

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Honour killings; KPCSW demands closure of legal loopholes

In view of the rising number of honour killings in the region, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW) pointed out on 01.08.24 that such killings remained virtually unpunished due to legal loopholes, as the perpetrators could not be convicted in most cases.

On 30.07.2014, a minor boy and a woman were killed and her daughter was injured in a remote village in the Khanpur region. According to media reports, three people opened fire on the group. It is assumed that the double murder was caused by marital disputes.

On 30.07.24, a woman was shot dead in the district of Lakki Marwat. Nothing is known about the background to the crime.¹⁹

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Security situation

The authorities announced on 30.07.24 that a man was killed in Dera Ismail Khan following an argument in the Mandharan Kalan area, and that thereafter his brother was abducted by gunmen. A minor girl died when unidentified men shot at the vehicle she was travelling in with her injured mother on the Daraban Road near Kulachi Mor.

On 31.07.24, two policemen and a civilian were killed in a night attack on a check post in the Landi Kotal area of Khyber district. Other people were injured. According to officials, an unknown number of armed militants opened fire on a security check post on the Torkham Highway near a military barracks.²⁰

Balochistan: Attacks on security forces in Pishin district

On the night of 31.07.24, unknown perpetrators attacked a security check point with automatic weapons in the Milizai region of Pishin district. Two security personnel were killed. A few hours later, armed men on motorbikes attacked a traffic policeman on duty in the Jan Adha area of the busy Pishin Bazaar. He escaped with injuries.²¹

Anti-terrorism authority NACTA categorises Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group and Majid Brigade as terrorists

On 31.07.24, the Pakistani counter-terrorism authority NACTA added the Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group and the Majid Brigade to its list of terrorist organisations. The Hafiz Gul Bahadur group is active in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Following an agreement in 2006, the group ceased its attacks on the Pakistani government, but resumed its attacks from Afghanistan, where the group is said to have thousands of allies, according to the Pakistani

Foreign Ministry. The Majid Brigade is the special forces unit of the Baloch Liberation Army, an ethnic Baloch militant group that has recently stepped up its attacks on Pakistani military bases and Chinese nationals in Balochistan.²²

Palestinian Territories / Israel

Gaza Strip: Current developments; humanitarian situation

The Hamas-led Ministry of Health stated on 04.08.24 that more than 39,538 Palestinians had been killed and 91,389 others wounded in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war. The ministry does not officially distinguish between combatants and civilians.

On 02.08.24, the Israeli military reported a total of 329 military personnel killed and 2,176 wounded since the start of the ground offensive. It is said that Hamas is still holding 115 hostages in the Gaza Strip, 41 of whom are now presumed dead. Four hostages were already held in Gaza before the war began.

The fighting in the Gaza Strip continues.

According to the UN, over 40,000 cases of hepatitis A have now been identified and a polio outbreak is considered likely.

The WFP announced on 30.07.24 that currently it can only supply twelve of the 18 bakeries it normally supplies in the Gaza Strip due to the difficulties. The prices for food are very high, especially in the north of the Gaza Strip. Nevertheless, humanitarian aid could be delivered to 1.1 million people in July 2024.

Several districts in Gaza report that their motor pool for general public services has been largely destroyed, making maintenance and everyday tasks such as rubbish collection much more difficult and sometimes impossible.²³

Allegations of abuse of Palestinian prisoners

According to a new OHCHR report, 53 Palestinian prisoners have died in Israeli custody since the war began. Allegations of mistreatment of prisoners in Sde Teiman, an Israeli army detention centre, and the admission of a prisoner with signs of maltreatment indicating sexual abuse, led to a raid by Israeli military police on the facility, during which nine soldiers were detained. The incident triggered a spontaneous protest by nationalist Israelis in front of the facility, which even received some support from Knesset members. An unsuccessful attempt was made to free the prisoners. For the time being, eight of the detainees remain in custody following the opening of the investigation.²⁴

West Bank: Supreme Court judgement

On 01.08.24, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that Palestinian residents of two villages who had fled violence by Israeli settlers must be allowed to return. The judgement states that the police had responded too late and inadequately to the emergency calls and that the Israeli security authorities were obliged to protect Palestinian civilians in the region.²⁵

West Bank: Nine dead in Israeli air strikes

On 03.08.24, nine men were killed in two Israeli air strikes. The Israeli army, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad confirmed that both cases involved members of radical Islamic militias. According to the Israeli military, at least the first group was in the process of carrying out an attack.

Around 590 Palestinians have died in violent clashes and attacks in the West Bank since 07.10.23, although it is unclear what proportion of them were violent perpetrators. In the same period, 23 Israelis died in attacks and five soldiers died in firefights with Palestinian militants in the West Bank.²⁶

Russian Federation

Prisoner exchange: release of several political prisoners

In the most extensive prisoner exchange since the end of the Cold War, a total of 15 prisoners from Russia and one prisoner from Belarus were handed over to Western states on 01.08.24. Immediately before they had been pardoned by President Putin and Lukashenko, respectively. In addition to foreign nationals such as the US journalist Evan Gershkovich and the German Rico Krieger, who had been sentenced to death in Belarus (cf. BN of 29.07.24)

this was the first exchange to include Russian citizens who had been sentenced to prison terms of two and a half to 25 years in their home country for statements and actions critical of the government. Among them the prominent opposition politicians Vladimir Kara-Murza and Ilya Yashin, the civil rights activist Oleg Orlov, three former heads of regional offices of the late Alexei Navalny and an artist who opposed the war in Ukraine. In return, Russia received eight compatriots imprisoned in Western countries, mostly for espionage and in one case for murder.

According to the Russian human rights organisation Memorial, at least 765 people are currently being unjustly detained in Russia for political or other ideological, in particular religious, reasons, although the organisation assumes that the number of unreported cases is high. The civil rights portal OVD-Info puts the number of those affected at more than 1,300.²⁷

Sri Lanka

State campaign against places of worship of religious minorities

HRW reported on 28.07.24 that authorities and security forces, including the State Department of Archaeology, the military and the police, are conducting a campaign in the country's north and east to deny Hindus and other religious minorities, such as Muslims, access to their places of worship and other property and to convert some of these places into Buddhist sites.²⁸

Sudan

Ongoing battles

According to media reports, a Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) base in Jabiat, around 100 kilometres south of the interim capital Port Sudan, was attacked by a drone that killed five people on 31.07.2014. At the time of the attack, an army graduation ceremony was taking place, which was also attended by General al-Burhan. Al-Burhan blamed the paramilitary organisation Rapid Support Forces (RSF) for the attack and announced that he would no longer negotiate with the RSF. He cancelled his participation in the talks scheduled in Switzerland for 14.08.24 (cf. BN of 29.07.24). A spokesman for the RSF denied any responsibility for the attack.

The deputy commander-in-chief of the SAF explained that the SAF intended to fight until the RSF was defeated or had given up. He also said that al-Burhan had announced that he would resign and hand over his office to one of his deputies.

According to media reports, the army has managed to take control of several neighbourhoods in the west of the city of Omdurman since 01.08.24 pushing back RSF units. In addition, the first battles between the SAF and RSF in Blue Nile state took place on 03.08.24, with the SAF repelling an attack by the RSF, the reports said. Contrary to this, the RSF claimed to have conquered areas in Blue Nile State. The respective statements could not be independently verified.²⁹

Humanitarian situation

On 01.08.24, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) declared that the Zamzam Camp in El Fasher, North Darfur, exceeded the threshold for the classification as famine (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification - IPC 5) in June 2024. In two other camps in the region around El Fasher, Abu Shouk and El Salam, a famine is likely according to FEWS NET, but cannot yet be classified accordingly due to a lack of data. FEWS NET also believes that the conditions in the city of El Fasher itself is likely to be categorised as famine (IPC 5). IPC 5 is the highest level of this system defining areas in which at least one in five persons or households suffers from acute food shortages and is at risk of hunger and hardship. Since the system was introduced 20 years ago, the current classification is the third time that a famine has been declared.³⁰

Syria

Arrest campaign in Babbila

According to an article on a Syrian news portal on 31.07.24, government troops launched a large-scale arrest campaign in the village of Babbila, south of the capital Damascus.

According to the report, at least 50 young men have been arrested within a week, most of them because they were wanted for doing their military service. The government forces arrested wanted persons by setting up mobile checkpoints and by raiding. After paying large bribes, some of those arrested have been released, the report said.³¹

Reports of civilian deaths during the first half of 2024

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) recorded a total of 1,034 civilian fatalities inside Syria in the months of January to July 2024 inclusive. The organisation provides a brief list of the individual incidents.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) recorded at least 494 civilian deaths for the same period.

Both organisations rely on figures generated by sources on the ground. In the description of its methodology, SNHR points out that the figures can only represent a minimum of the deaths that actually occur, as not all cases can be recorded due to methodological constraints, logistical limitations, safety concerns and limited resources.³²

Türkiye

Censorship of social media platforms

According to media reports, access to the social network Instagram was blocked on 02.08.24. The Information Technology and Communications Authority (BTK) did not give any reasons for the blockage. According to AFP news agency, President Erdoğan's communications director, Fahrettin Altun, is said to have levelled accusations of censorship against Instagram. On 31.07.24, he had accused Instagram of preventing people from posting condolence messages for Ismail Haniyeh, the chairman of the Hamas politburo who died in Tehran on 31.07.24., on the platform.

According to information allegedly provided to a news site by BTK employees, Instagram is said to have violated the so-called catalogue of offences. These offences include "insulting Atatürk" and "sexual abuse of children". According to a BTK employee, such content had been accessible on Instagram which was consequently blocked. According to press reports, around 57 million users are registered on Instagram in Türkiye.

A ruling by the Constitutional Court declaring certain powers of the Directorate of Presidential Communications, such as interference with freedom of expression and freedom of the press, invalid was removed from the Constitutional Court's website on 02.08.24. This caused opposition media to accuse the government of censorship. According to the Turkish Association for Freedom of Expression (İFÖD), the e-book platform Wattpad was banned on 12.07.24 by a decision of the 10th Criminal Court in Ankara. The ban, the detailed reasons for which were not disclosed by the authorities, has been in force since 16.07.24. The ban was preceded by criticism of conservative groups on social media of the content available on Wattpad. A founding member of the İFÖD publicly stated that it was not clear whether Wattpad had been blocked to protect children from harmful content or to protect public order in Türkiye.

According to the İFÖD, access to a total of 953,415 websites and domain names was blocked in Türkiye in 2023 as a result of 821,285 different decisions from 833 institutions and judicial authorities.³³

Uganda

Arrest of opposition members

On 29.07.24, 36 opposition members of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) were arrested and charged with terrorist offences. The opposition members had previously been arrested during a leadership training trip to Kenya and subsequently deported. The Ugandan government accuses the individuals of having travelled to Kenya to attend "terrorist training". Human rights organisations assume that the arrests were arbitrary.³⁴

Released on bail after pre-trial detention for charges under the anti-LGBTIQ law

After almost a year in custody, Michael Opolot was released on bail at the beginning of August 2024. Opolot was initially charged with "aggravated homosexuality" in Soroti (north-east Uganda). The charge was subsequently changed to a lesser one ("unnatural offences"), but bail was repeatedly denied. Since the introduction of the stricter anti-LGBTIQ law in June 2023, the LGBTIQ community has been increasingly confronted with rights violations and arrests (cf. BN of 05.06., 17.07. and 11.09.23).³⁵

Ukraine

Civilian casualties and evacuations

According to regional governors, three people in Torezk and one person in Hrodivka were killed by Russian shelling in the Donetsk region on 29.07.24. According to media reports from 01.08.24, another two civilians were killed by Russian shelling in Marynivka (Donetsk region). The regional governors reported on 01.08.24 that one person was killed by Russian shelling in the Kherson and Kharkiv regions, respectively. Two more people died in Nikopol (Dnipropetrovsk region). Former Russian opposition politician Ilya Ponomarev was injured in a Russian drone attack near Kyiv on 01.08.24. According to media reports from 04.08.24, one person was killed by Russian fire in the Donetsk region.

According to media reports from 05.08.24, the governor of the Donetsk region announced an evacuation order for children, their parents and legal guardians living in areas close to the front line. As a result, 744 children and their families were relocated from the town of Novohrodivka (20 kilometres from the front), to four other regions of the country. A volunteer evacuation assistant informed that the number of evacuation requests in the embattled areas of the Donetsk region has increased tenfold in the last two weeks.³⁶

War effort

Heavy fighting continues in the Donetsk region, with Russian troops attempting to break through the Ukrainian defences. Russian attacks are mounting pressure on the strategic logistics centre of Pokrovsk. According to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Russian troops are advancing further in the strategically important small town of Chasiv Yar and have crossed the natural defence line of the Seversky Donets-Donbas Canal. The Russian forces have gained approximately 57 square kilometres of territory within a week. According to the Ukrainian commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrskyj, these minor territorial gains were achieved at the price of heavy losses for the Russian units. Meanwhile, Ukraine has received its first F-16 fighter jets from the US. According to the Ukrainian General Staff, a Russian submarine from the Black Sea Fleet was sunk and the defences of the Kerch Bridge were destroyed. President Zelenskyy said in an interview that he would not agree to ceding territory as part of any peace settlement with Moscow without the consent of his people.³⁷

Energy supply

According to the state energy company Ukrenerho, the energy supply situation is currently improving. For the first time in a month, the country did not experience any power cuts on 30.07.24. Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal explained that electricity was imported from the EU to close the gap in power generation. Preparations are also being made for the cold season and alternative sources of power generation are being developed. Meanwhile, in a report for 2024 and 2025, the Ukrainian central bank predicts continued emigration due to the tense energy situation and the slow normalisation of economic conditions, it expects a trend reversal from 2026.³⁸

Venezuela

Protests in the aftermath of the presidential elections: Killings, injuries and further arrests

In the days following the presidential election, there were repeated protests in various parts of the country against the highly controversial election results published by the Supreme Electoral Council (CNE) which were accompanied by calls for the resignation of President Maduro.

Numerous governments and organisations had insisted that the CNE publish the results broken down by polling station, which has still not happened. While, on 02.08.24, the CNE once again confirmed that President Maduro had won the elections after counting almost 97% of the votes, the opposition claimed that González Urrutia had received a clear majority of the votes based on the election protocols available to it from a large number of polling stations. The opposition has now published around 80% of the election protocols available to it on a website to be checked by independent bodies and for a self-check by voters at their own polling stations by entering their personal identification number. Furthermore, in the light of this evidence, the US, the EU and other countries recently stated that they would not recognise Maduro's election victory.

On 29.07.24, President Maduro had already announced that he would expel the staff of seven Latin American countries following statements relating to the elections, including the staff of the Argentinian embassy. This is

where several employees of Vente Venezuela are still staying under protection of embassy asylum. Brazil is now to take over the protection of the people in question.

On 31.07.24, Maduro had already called on the pro-government Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ) to conduct a supposedly independent review of the election results. On 02.08.24, all election participants were supposed to appear before the TSJ for this, however, González Urrutia forewent the meeting.

According to her own statements, Maria Corina Machado (Vente Venezuela) had recently gone into hiding for fear of arrest and for her life, she reappeared at a large protest manifestation on 03.08.24. According to opposition sources, Machado's campaign office in Caracas was attacked by armed, masked men on 02.08.24. The premises were vandalised and various documents were stolen.

According to the NGO Foro Penal, almost 1,000 arrests, including such of minors, were verified during the protests between 29.07. and the morning of 04.08.24 (10 a.m. local time). President Maduro himself spoke of almost 2,000 arrests at a rally on 03.08.24. Those arrested are to be taken to the Tocarón prison, among other places, he said. Foro Penal warned of proceedings without due process and the denial of representation by lawyers of their own choosing.

It is also said that some prominent party members, including Freddy Superlano (Voluntad Popular), have been arrested. The NGO Monitor de Víctimas has so far reported 22 verified protest-related killings by colectivos, the military and the police and others. In addition, several portals have reported efforts to prevent protests by intimidating particularly the residents of poorer neighbourhoods, which used to be the main bastions of Chavismo in the past. The situation on the ground remains tense.³⁹

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Briefing Notes
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