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Briefing Notes

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Afghanistan

Narcotic crop cultivation eradicated by the Taliban

According to local reports, the Taliban have deployed troops to Argo district in Badakhshan province amid protests by local residents against poppy field eradication. More than 100 Taliban fighters are said to have been dispatched to Argo from Faizabad and Taloqan, where they are said to have clashed with local farmers and residents. Sources report that more than 30 people have been arrested by the Taliban.

According to media reports, Noor Agha Haidar, the Taliban's police chief in Ghor province, arrested at least 80 individuals during a recent visit to Pasaband district who were accused of having cultivated narcotic crops. The Taliban's police command in Ghor confirmed that the eradication of several poppy fields had been supervised during the visit to the district. According to local sources, those detained stated that they had been held in inhumane conditions, crammed into a small room and denied access to food and water.¹

Governance and persecution

As the Taliban move forward with an extensive plan to reduce the number of posts in the public service, sources inside several ministries report that women and former employees of the republic will face the greatest risk of dismissal (cf. BN of 05.05.25).

According to media reports of 11.05.25, the Taliban have dismissed hundreds of university professors, including both men and women, in Kabul, Herat and Bamiyan provinces in a sweeping and so far largely unexplained move. The Taliban have confirmed that hundreds of books have been banned and removed from libraries and bookstores across Afghanistan over the past three years. Abdulhaq Emad, head of copyright at the Taliban's ministry of information and culture, said that the content of these books was inconsistent with sharia or the Taliban's ideological principles.

According to media reports, the Taliban's general directorate of physical education and sports is said to have banned the game of chess across Afghanistan. Atal Mashwani, the authority's Taliban spokesman, stated that the decision followed concerns over the chess federation's leadership, and was furthermore based on "sharia-related considerations".

According to media reports on 06.05.25, the Taliban's morality police have detained seven people, including the groom, at a wedding party in eastern Nangarhar province for playing music. The instruments are said to have been destroyed and the detainees only freed one day later on the condition that they would not play music again.

The Taliban government has imposed a ban on the publication and broadcasting of images of living beings in local media across Panjshir province. This means that this ban now applies in 15 provinces all over the country (Kandahar, Takhar, Badghis, Helmand, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Farah, Nimruz, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Jowzjan, Zabul, Parwan, Kunduz, Bamiyan and Daykundi).

According to local sources, the Taliban have detained three journalists in Takhar province. They are reported to have subsequently been subjected to torture while in custody at the Taliban's criminal investigation department.

According to reports, around 50 schoolgirls have been poisoned and locally hospitalised in two places in Daykundi province. Several of them were said to be in critical condition. Neswan Kiti school in Kiti district and another primary school in Chah Chah village, Shahristan district, were said to be affected. The cause of the poisoning was said to remain unclear, and local Taliban authorities have reportedly not yet commented on the incident. There had been similar incidents in various provinces in recent years. Despite calls from the UN, the USA and the EU for investigations to be carried out, these incidents remain uninvestigated by the Taliban as well as the perpetrators unidentified.

Media reports speak of a large number of recent murders committed by unknown offenders across the country. A man is said to have been shot and killed inside his home in Sheberghan, the capital of Jowzjan province, by 15 armed gunmen. No one is said to have claimed responsibility; the Taliban has not commented on the incident. This was the fourth unsolved killing reported on 09.05.25. Similar incidents are said to have already claimed the lives of three other men, including a former soldier, on the same day in Nangarhar, Nimroz, and Faryab provinces, respectively.²

Humanitarian situation

According to media reports, Taliban authorities in Ghor province (Sahrak-e-Mahajerin and Aludal in Lal district) are forcibly reclaiming half of the cash aid (one-off payments of 180 USD per family) distributed to impoverished families by the NGO “Razi Organization”, citing the construction of a local road as justification.

A new report by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) reveals that from October 2024 through April 2025, nationwide precipitation levels were 40 percent below the 40-year average, major deficits of up to more than 50 % in the north and west threatening both subsistence agriculture and broader food supply chains. The snowpack across the country is also said to be critically low. The snow water equivalent (SWE) – a key indicator for future irrigation and hydropower – is reportedly 40 to 60 percent below normal in major basins. April 2025 temperatures had been 2 to 4 degrees Celsius above average, reducing soil moisture further.³

Algeria

Two international arrest warrants issued for French-Algerian writer Kamel Daoud

The initial complaint against Daoud was submitted back in November 2024 by Saâda Arbane, a survivor of the Algerian civil war, accusing the writer and his psychiatrist wife Aicha Dahdouh of having used her personal story without her consent for his novel “Houris”. In 2024, Daoud won the Prix Goncourt, France’s highest prize for literature, for the novel, which centres on the civil war between the government and Islamists in the 1990s. The novel, banned in Algeria, tells the story of a young woman who loses her voice when an Islamist cuts her throat as she has to watch her family being massacred during the war. The first international arrest warrant was already issued against the writer in this connection in March.

The second complaint was submitted by the National Organisation for the Victims of Terrorism, which accuses the author of misrepresenting the events of the so-called “Black Decade” of the Algerian civil war in his book. It bases this on the 2005 “Law on national reconciliation”, which was adopted under the then regime of president Bouteflika and provided for between three and five years’ imprisonment for anyone “who through statements, writings or other acts exploits or instrumentalises the wounds of the national tragedy in order to harm the institutions of the Democratic People’s Republic of Algeria, to weaken the state or injure the honour of its honourable representatives, or is detrimental to the reputation of Algeria at international level.”

Daoud’s publisher Gallimard defended the writer and his wife, saying that they had been the victims of an orchestrated campaign following the banning of the book in Algeria. The French foreign ministry stated that Kamel Daoud was “a renowned and respected author”, and that France was committed to freedom of expression. The activities of the Algerian judiciary against Daoud are taking place against the background of a diplomatic crisis between Algeria and France which has been escalating for some time, and of the only recent conviction of Franco-Algerian author Boualem Sansal for his statements on the colonial history of the Maghreb in an interview with a French media outlet (cf. BN of 31.03. and 28.04.25).⁴

Belarus

Arrest on extremism charges

Ihar Losik, a journalist at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), has been behind bars in Belarus since being convicted in connection with the mass unrest that occurred in the wake of the 2020 presidential elections. According to reports of 09.05.25, his brother was also arrested in mid-April 2025 on extremism charges related to Russia's war against Ukraine for allegedly sending photographs of the movement of Russian military equipment in 2022 to a now-defunct independent Telegram channel that monitored military activity.⁵

Amnesty on the occasion of world war remembrance

According to media information, on 07.05.25 president Lukashenko announced the granting of pardons to 42 imprisoned opposition activists on the occasion of world war remembrance. Political analysts are said to regard this as an effort at rapprochement with the west in order to ease sanctions. On the same day, Lukashenko is furthermore said to have announced a sweeping amnesty for 8,000 people convicted on criminal charges. According to Viasna, a Belarus human rights group operating in exile, most political prisoners will not however be eligible for the amnesty.⁶

Egypt

Son of jailed Egyptian opposition leader Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh detained

According to media reports, Ahmed Aboul Fotouh was arrested on 16.04.25 by security forces at the Katameya Traffic Unit in New Cairo, while he was renewing his driving licence. According to his lawyer, he is said to have then been transferred to the Tenth of Ramadan Prison.

He is the son of jailed former presidential candidate and Strong Egypt Party leader, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, who has been in prison since early 2018. His son Ahmed is said to have since been active in documenting the rights violations and arbitrary measures that his father is said to have faced in solitary confinement, which are reported to have resulted in a deterioration in his mental and physical health and recurrent heart attacks.

The Third Terrorism Circuit of the Emergency State Security Criminal Court is said to be currently expected to review the retrial procedures concerning Ahmed Aboul Fotouh. This is said to follow the enforcement of a previous in absentia ruling against Aboul Fotouh, sentencing him to ten years in prison in the same case in which his father was sentenced to 15 years' hard labour.

According to the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, the Emergency State Security Criminal Court has a record of issuing harsh sentences in unfair trials against political opponents and human rights activists. It is claimed that in particular "recycling" is applied here again and again. This is an unlawful practice enacted to indefinitely extend the detention of political opponents by bringing a new case against a detainee on expiry of their sentence in a previous case.⁷

Haiti / USA

Criminal gangs designated as a transnational terrorist group

On 02.05.25, the US administration designated the criminal gang "Viv Ansanm" and the "Gran Grif" group, which is affiliated with it, as transnational terrorist groups. According to US secretary of state Marco Rubio, both criminal groups pose a direct threat to US national security interests, and are the main cause of instability and violence in Haiti. Rubio added that the gangs aimed to topple Haiti's government and set up a state in which they could commit crimes with impunity and terrorise the population. The designation gives the US administration broad powers to impose economic penalties on the criminal groups, and possibly even to intervene militarily. At the same time, however, it also made it possible to sanction those who were accused of doing business with the gangs. Critics complain that the move might endanger the activities of some NGOs which work with the gangs in order to be able to deliver aid to communities controlled by gangs. Private Haitian companies, including port operators, bus companies and mobile operators, furthermore had to pay fees to gangs. This might now expose

them to US sanctions. It is further feared that international companies might leave Haiti in order not to come into conflict with US laws.

The Viv Ansanm gang alliance was formed in 2023, promising to protect the civilian population. It however immediately started launching attacks on communities, hospitals, police stations and detention centres, and forced former prime minister Ariel Henry to resign on 11.03.24, after he had been unable to return to Haiti for security reasons (cf. BN of 08.04.24). The group Gran Grif, the stronghold of which lies in the Artibonite département, a major agricultural region to the north of the capital Port-au-Prince, is accused amongst other things of having killed 109 people in an attack in the town of Ponte Sondé in 2024 (cf. BN of 07.10.24).

Roughly 85 % of Port-au-Prince is currently controlled by gangs, and the short-staffed Multinational Security Support Mission has yet to manage to bring about any sustainable improvements in the security situation. UN special representative Maria Isabel Salvador warned the UN Security Council on 21.04.25 that gang violence had increased considerably, and that the country was approaching a “point of no return”. According to UN information, more than 1,600 people were killed as a result of gang violence between January and March 2025, and more than one million displaced internally. The UN furthermore estimates that more than half the Haitian population, roughly 5.7 million people, will experience acute food insecurity by June 2025.⁸

India / Pakistan

Ceasefire agreed on; situation in Pakistani-administrated Kashmir

On 10.05.25, India and Pakistan agreed on a US-mediated ceasefire, which so far seems to be largely holding. Victory celebrations were held in both countries on 11.05.25. Bilateral relations had previously been extremely tense after a deadly 22.04.25 attack on a group of tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir and the ensuing military escalation (cf. BN of 05.05.25 and 28.04.25). Pakistan reported targeted airstrikes by the Indian military in the period from 06.05. to 08.05.25, including in Kotli, Bahawalpur, Muridke, Bagh and Muzaffarabad. More than thirty Pakistani civilians had been killed in the strikes, according to Pakistani media reports, including 16 in Muridke and Bahawalpur. Dozens more people had also been injured. Pakistani media reported downing five Indian fighter jets. There were also reports of ongoing exchanges of fire up to 09.05.25 along the demarcation line (line of control) that runs through Kashmir.

Six civilians were killed by Indian shelling in Pakistani-administered Kashmir (Azad Kashmir) in the night of 08.-09.05.25, and homes, schools and hospitals damaged. According to official sources, the shelling had displaced 1,186 families internally. The state of emergency continues to apply in the districts along the line of control. Educational facilities remain closed in the entire region for the time being. Shelling along the line of control has ceased since 11.05.25.⁹

Iran

Jailed poet and environmental activist sentenced to death

According to a report by a Norway-based Iranian human rights organisation of 06.05.25, well-known Iranian poet and environmental activist Peyman Farahavar has been sentenced to death in prison. He stands accused of armed rebellion and “waging war against God”. The man is additionally said to have received a three-month prison term for propaganda against the government. The convict is said to have been accused of expressing criticism of government institutions and officials in his publications, amongst other things over environmental damage and structural irregularities in Gilan province. He was arrested by force in September 2024 in Rasht (Gilan province) and detained in the local Lakan Prison. Referring to information from the man’s family, his health is said to have deteriorated considerably while in detention. The convict is said to have previously been detained because of his publications and engagement in criticism of authorities.

The PEN Centre Germany writers’ association expressed its criticism of the death sentence in a press release of 08.05.25.¹⁰

Femicide: woman killed by husband in street attack

According to a media report of 08.05.25, an Iranian teacher was killed by her husband in a street attack in Sabzevar (Razavi Khorasan province). The woman was the mother of three children, and is said to have been living separately from her husband and to have filed for divorce shortly before the attack. The exact reason for the deadly attack was however unknown. The murder victim is said to have previously submitted complaints to the local education department against her husband, who is also employed in the education sector, citing instances of violence and threats on his part. No protective measures had been taken in response to this.

The information on the case is based on a report from a Norway-based human rights organisation, and cannot be verified via other sources.¹¹

Lebanon

Situation in southern Lebanon

Israel continues to fly isolated airstrikes against targets which Israel considers to be in breach of the ceasefire agreement. 08.05.25 saw the largest airstrike so far on a complex in Nabatieh in which an underground Hezbollah complex was destroyed using bunker buster weapons. According to the stipulations contained in the ceasefire agreement, this should have been destroyed by the Lebanese, or at least handed over to the Lebanese military. An unspecified number of Hezbollah members lost their lives in the incident.¹²

Second round of municipal elections

The second round of the municipal elections in Lebanon, the first such ballot since 2016, was held on 11.05.25. The elections had previously been repeatedly postponed, for funding reasons amongst others. This round sees voting in the north Lebanon district. The results are regarded as a test of the atmosphere in terms of the extent to which the war between Hezbollah and Israel has changed Lebanon's political landscape. It is said to have been marred by some clashes between the adherents of the various parties, but to have been held in a regular fashion overall, according to observers' estimates.¹³

Disarming Palestinian groups

Palestinian groups, especially Hamas, are facing rising pressure to disarm. After several missile attacks on Israel had been attempted from Lebanese soil, and some in fact carried out, on 06.05.25 Hamas turned over the third person suspected of carrying out rocket attacks at the end of March, after his alleged accomplices had already been handed over in the previous week. Hamas once more publicly announced that these attacks had not been agreed with the leadership, and had been committed by individual actors. The organisation has maintained an official office in Beirut since 2023, and has a strong presence in several Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.¹⁴

Libya

Videos circulating of abducted member of parliament Ibrahim al-Darsi

Member of parliament Ibrahim al-Darsi was abducted in the city centre on 16.05.24 after attending a military parade for the General Command forces in Benghazi. Security authorities in Benghazi stated at the time that the incident was "criminal" and that the MP had been kidnapped for robbery.

A year after his disappearance, leaked videos have now begun circulating on social media, showing a man widely identified as the missing MP. The recordings show him nearly naked, sitting on the ground, chained with iron shackles, and in a visibly poor condition. According to media reports, the footage was recorded inside a secret detention centre in Benghazi operated by the Tariq Bin Ziyad militia, which reports directly to Saddam Haftar and has previously been accused of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of political opponents. Other video sequences show al-Darsi apparently pleading with Saddam Haftar to show mercy, spare his life, and release him.

According to media reports, al-Darsi's abduction by Libyan security forces stemmed from his outspoken criticism of the so-called "Benghazi Reconstruction Project". He is said to have accused influential figures close to the Haftar family, notably Belqasem Haftar, of embezzling millions of Libyan dinars for private projects, which are then rebranded under the reconstruction initiative. Al-Darsi's accusations came at a sensitive time, amid growing

reports of massive amounts of public funds being funnelled into private companies linked to the Haftar family. He had disappeared just days later. Neither the house of representatives nor the public prosecution office had issued a statement on the incident or demanded consequences.

The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) expressed “deep concern” over the circulating footage, confirming that it clearly showed signs of torture and abuse. The mission called for an immediate, impartial, independent investigation, emphasising that enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings constituted grave crimes potentially prosecutable by the International Criminal Court. In a joint statement, the EU missions also strongly condemned the arbitrary detention of political opponents by Libyan authorities, and stressed the need to hold those responsible for al-Darsi’s disappearance accountable.

The Libyan NGO Libyan Crimes Watch confirms that serious human rights violations in Libyan prisons, in particular in the east of the country controlled by Haftar’s forces, are the order of the day. According to a report of 11.05.2025, Faisal Awad Abshish, a detainee at the Garnada military prison, only recently died due to medical negligence.¹⁵

Nigeria

Ten-place drop in Press Freedom Ranking in 2025

Nigeria ranks 122nd out of 180 in the annually-updated RSF World Press Freedom Index, and has thus dropped ten places in comparison to 2024 (cf. BN of 13.05.24). This emerges from the ranking for 2025 released by RSF on 02.05.25. Nigeria ranked 123rd in 2023 and 129th in 2022 (cf. BN of 05.06.23).

According to critical voices, the level of governmental influence exerted on media professionals in Nigeria is significant. This is also said to apply to the appointment of media officials. Press freedoms were guaranteed in the Nigerian constitution, but anti-terrorism laws for instance existed making it possible to prosecute journalists. Five media professionals were currently in detention. The economic pressures on media outlets were also concerning. The growing influence of artificial intelligence should furthermore be pointed out. The number of print media had fallen recently. Nigeria nonetheless still had a relatively diverse media landscape.

According to RSF, the global situation with regard to press freedom is at a historic low in 2025.¹⁶

Pakistan

Member of the Ahmadiyya community killed in Karachi

According to media reports, several hundred supporters of the Islamist political group Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan and other religious parties passed through Saddar neighbourhood in Karachi (Sindh province) on 18.04.25, chanting slogans against members of the Ahmadiyya community who were offering Friday prayers in a place of worship located there. An Ahmadi had subsequently been attacked with sticks and bricks and lost his life. The police are said to have taken more than two dozen Ahmadis into custody for their safety and to have attempted to hold back the crowd of, according to media reports, 600 chanting persons. The latter called on the authorities to close the place of worship and prosecute the Ahmadis.¹⁷

BLA attack on security forces in Balochistan

According to information from the Pakistani military of 06.05.25, seven soldiers were killed by an IED in Kacchi district in Balochistan province. The attack was blamed on the separatist Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), which Pakistan accuses of receiving support from India.¹⁸

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Gaza Strip: recent developments

The war events in the Gaza Strip still continue. On 07.05.25, for instance, according to information from the Hamas-run authorities, at least 92 persons were killed in Israeli airstrikes. US president Trump stated that only 21 Israeli hostages in the Gaza Strip were left alive. Three more hostages had reportedly died.

On 05.05.25, Israel once more increased pressure on the Gaza Strip by calling up tens of thousands of reservists and announcing an intensification of the military operation that had been adopted by cabinet. According to Israeli officials, the announced broadening of the offensive is to start slowly in case agreement is reached in the ceasefire negotiations after all. According to an online media outlet, the operation is to start as soon as Trump returns in the coming week from his journey to the Gulf States, which is planned to last until at least 15.05.25, if no ceasefire has been reached by then.

On 06.05.2025, an Israeli newspaper quoted a senior Hamas official as stating that Hamas was no longer interested in ceasefire negotiations, as Israel's "hunger war" must be ended first. The group nonetheless announced on 11.05.2025 that the last US hostage remaining alive was to be released at an early date in the course of the ceasefire negotiations.

According to media reports, the new plan to broaden the military operation in the Gaza Strip provides for the destruction of built-up structures in most of the Gaza Strip, for the territory to be occupied, and for the Israeli military to remain in the Gaza Strip indefinitely. According to a military spokesperson, first the entire population of the Gaza Strip, some 2 million people, are to be resettled to take them to an area where they are protected against Hamas. According to a government spokesperson, the resettlement was to be to the south of the Gaza Strip. As an alternative, the Israeli government is planning to offer the residents of the Gaza Strip opportunities to resettle in third countries, this being a voluntary matter. Given the massive pressure and the disastrous situation in the Gaza Strip, this estimation has however been the subject of sharp criticism. It is furthermore not clear at present whether any countries would declare a willingness to accept Palestinians.

The humanitarian situation is meanwhile continuing to come to a head. Due to a reduction in food aid, Palestinians have started searching through the aid organisations' warehouses for remnants of meals. There has been a considerable increase in the amount of looting on the part of armed groups. Shortages of medical equipment and medicines continue unabated. One of the largest humanitarian aid organisations, World Central Kitchen, has closed its soup kitchens, which were previously providing 133,000 meals per day, on 08.05.2025, as they no longer had sufficient food. At least one-third of UN-run soup kitchens has also already had to close so far. According to a UNICEF spokesperson, 65-70 % of the water system in the Gaza Strip has been damaged. This leads to water shortages among the population.

In a fresh initiative, the newly-founded Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, made up primarily of security companies, former members of the military and humanitarian aid workers, proposed to take over the distribution of aid in the Gaza Strip. Such action would be similar to what Israel had recently proposed. The Israeli proposal was accused of seeking to weaponise humanitarian aid, as Israel, one of the parties to the conflict, would have control of distribution. The plan to set up four aid distribution centres has however come under criticism, as this would force the population to resettle near the centres. Four distribution centres would furthermore be insufficient to distribute adequate amounts of aid.

According to media reports, Hamas has executed six Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and shot 13 others in the legs for alleged looting. The group announced that there would be further executions as part of a larger-scale scheme. Looting by gangs had increased considerably in recent weeks. Hamas is accusing some of the gangs of collaborating with Israel.¹⁹

West Bank: houses demolished

On 05.05.25, Israeli authorities demolished the hamlet of Khalet al-Dab in the West Bank, consisting of several built-up structures. Nine houses, five tents and five barns were destroyed, according to the head of the village council. The responsible Israeli authority stated that the hamlet had been built illegally in a military zone.

Palestinians have been criticising Israel for years that it was virtually impossible to obtain Israeli planning permission for areas in the West Bank. The hamlet was located in the Masafer Yatta area, in which Israeli settlers have set up several outposts which they are expanding.

Residents of Tulkarem learned that dozens of buildings in the Tulkarem and Nur Shams refugee camps were to be torn down as part of the Israeli military offensive. The demolitions made it easier for the Israeli military to gain access to the camps, and would prevent armed groups re-forming there. Large parts of different neighbourhoods in the towns of Jenin and Tulkarem are said to have already been destroyed.²⁰

East Jerusalem: Israeli authorities close several UNRWA schools

On 08.05.25, Israeli authorities in Jerusalem closed six schools in east Jerusalem which are run by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The closure is in implementation of new Israeli legislation banning UNRWA activities in Israel. Roughly 800 school pupils are affected by the closures.

The Israeli education ministry announced that it would divide the school pupils among other schools in Jerusalem. This however meets with considerable obstacles such as going around the barrier for instance dividing the Shuafat displacement camp from the rest of Jerusalem. Some 100 of the school pupils have identity documents from the West Bank, which makes it even more difficult for them to get through the barrier. A high absenteeism rate is feared for the school pupils.

Teargas was used in one of the schools as it was closed. According to information from the Israeli police, the school had not been the target of the teargas operation, but they had advanced into the Shuafat refugee camp, as stones had been thrown at them from there.²¹

Peru

13 mine workers found dead after kidnapping

According to reports, on 04.05.25 in Patáz province in the north of Peru, 13 mine workers were found dead who had already been kidnapped by a criminal gang in an armed attack on 26.04.25. There is said to have been a spike in attacks on mine workers in the region in recent years, committed by criminal groups active in illegal mining, and clashes over access to mine shafts. Several deaths are said to have already taken place in this context from 2023 and 2024. As well as illegal mining, the criminal organisations are said to be active above all in racketeering, but there had also been killings for hire. President Boluarte has suspended mining for 30 days and sent in the military. According to the murder victims' employer, violence had been escalating for a prolonged period, and police crime prevention had not been sufficiently efficient so far.²²

South Africa

Court action against labour ministry because of introduction of state diversity goals for companies

According to recent press reports, employer organisations and the coalition party Democratic Alliance (DA) have taken legal action against amendments to labour law contained in the Employment Equity Amendment Act (EEAA). Employers' associations referred to the amendments to the EEAA as "unconstitutional, impossible and harmful". The Act, which was published by the labour ministry in April, is said to introduce numerical targets for ethnicity and gender across 18 economic sectors which are to be achieved in the next five years. The DA is said to have justified its legal action with the principle of equal treatment in employment, arguing that it would create race-based employment quotas which would exclude and harm certain segments of the population. The amendments were said not only to aim to set numerical stipulations, but also to apply quotas on pain of the imposition of major sanctions. The African National Congress, by contrast, was said to have called the legal action "anti-transformation", as it stood in the way of diversity.²³

South Sudan

UN Security Council calls for an end to fighting in South Sudan

According to reports of 08.05.25, the UN Security Council called on the conflict parties in South Sudan to put an end to the fighting in the country and enter into a political dialogue. The peacekeeping mandate (UNMISS) was reportedly extended by one year up to 30.04.26. Ceilings of 17,000 UN troops and 2,100 police had been maintained. Force levels could however be adjusted, according to the UN Security Council.

The conflict between president Salva Kiir and vice president Riek Machar has come to a head since February 2025 (cf. BN of 31.03. and 05.05.25).²⁴

Sudan

At least 33 civilians killed in RSF drone strikes

According to reports of 10.05.25, at least 33 civilians were killed in several drone strikes carried out by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF): On 09.05.25, 14 persons were said to have been killed in a strike on the Abu Shuk displacement camp in al-Fashir; roughly 19 persons were said to have been killed in another strike on a prison in al-Obeid on 10.05.25, and another 45 wounded. The RSF had already carried out deliberate attacks on the displacement camp in recent months (cf. BN of 12.08.24 and 05.05.25). The Sudanese Army is said to have flown strikes on the Darfur cities of Nyala and El-Geneina on 10.05.25, destroying arms depots of the RSF militia.²⁵

Genocide allegation: ICJ rejects court action against UAE

Sudan's action against the UAE was rejected by the International Court of Justice after the judges voted by 14 to two on 05.05.25 to declare that they had no jurisdiction. Sudan had accused the UAE of being guilty of acts of genocide in West Darfur by supporting the RSF with arms and money. The UAE had refuted the accusations (cf. BN of 14.04.25). The rejection of the action had been formally reasoned: The UAE did ratify the genocide convention, but inserted a reservation excluding the provision which states that the ICJ had jurisdiction for disputes about the interpretation, application and fulfilment of the convention. It had therefore not been possible to rule on the case.²⁶

Syria

After fighting in Damascus suburbs and Suwayda

A tense calm returned to neighbourhoods in the wake of fighting in Jaramana and Sahnaya neighbourhoods, close to Damascus city, in the previous week (cf. BN of 05.05.25).

It was initially agreed in an agreement reached between the transitional government and Druze leadership that no external security personnel would be sent to Suwayda governorate. In fact, local forces are to be nominally affiliated with the General Security Forces and to continue to be responsible for security. Only a police chief appointed by the transitional government was not himself from Suwayda. Druze groups had previously refused to hand over their weapons and integrate into the security apparatus like other groups. This symbolic affiliation with the transitional government could build bridges of trust towards further integration of the Druze forces into the security apparatus.

Suwayda initially continued to see isolated fighting between factions collaborating with the transitional government and groups loyal to Assad. Roughly four persons are said to have been killed in the al-Dour neighbourhood, near the Daraa-Suwayda governorate border.

Fears remain high among the Druze population, as well as in other minorities in Syria. Large amounts of sectarian content have been circulating online, partly stemming from falsified depictions of the circumstances portrayed. Because of open hostility in Homs, large numbers of Druze students have left their dormitories in various towns in the past weeks and returned to their families or been accommodated in separate, secure dormitories. The ministry of higher education prohibited the sharing of content that harms national unity or civil peace by students and staff at the universities.²⁷

Retaliatory killings and attacks on Alawites continue

There have been ongoing attacks on persons because of their Alawite beliefs, as well as retaliatory killings of persons (allegedly) working with or for the Assad government. According to reports, an Alawite sheikh and journalist was for instance killed on 04.05.25 in the village of al Zafarana, Homs governorate, by the Salafi-jihadi group Saraya Ansar al Sunnah. The group believes that Alawites are apostates. A senior member of the military under Assad had been abducted and killed on 03.05.25 in the Najih neighbourhood, in Dar'a governorate.

According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), at least 361 civilians are said to have been extrajudicially killed in Homs and Hama governorates between January and the end of April 2025. Most of the deadly attacks are said to have taken place in areas inhabited by Alawites. The number of retaliatory killings and attacks on the Alawite population also remains high in other parts of the country, especially in the coastal region.

According to reports, the general security service banned the use of motorcycles after 7 p.m. in Homs City, presumably in an attempt to stop the killings, as many attacks were carried out by armed motorcyclists. Armed riding of a motorcycle was reportedly prohibited during the day.²⁸

Public sector salaries increased thanks to Qatari financial support

According to media reports of 08.05.2025, Qatar will be providing financial support to the Syrian transitional government so that it can increase public sector salaries.

The Qatari government had agreed to provide the support several months ago, but had not yet been willing to risk breaching US sanctions. A news agency has now reported that the USA had approved the payments of 29 million USD per month for the coming three months, and pledged to exempt the payments from sanctions. There was an option to renew the payments. The financial support was however earmarked exclusively for salary increases for civilian public sector workers. The interior and defence ministries, to which both the general security service and the department for military operation belong, are excluded from the funding. Whilst the news agency article reports of a 400 % raise in salaries from the following month onwards, other media outlets cite increases of only 20 % beginning next month.²⁹

First international flight lands at Aleppo; direct flights to the EU announced

A plane of Royal Jordanian Airlines touched down at Aleppo International Airport on 06.05.2025, after a hiatus of 14 years. This was also the first international flight to Aleppo since the toppling of the Assad government in December 2024. There are plans to operate three flights per week in future.

Romanian airline DAN Air furthermore announced plans to offer direct flights between Damascus and the cities of Bucharest, Frankfurt, Berlin and Stockholm from mid-June 2025. According to their website, two flights per destination per week are planned.³⁰

Türkiye

EU accession process to remain frozen

According to a press release, the European Parliament (EP) decided on 07.05.2025 not to resume Türkiye's EU accession process. EU membership is said to be about democracy, but Türkiye was pushing ever further towards an autocracy, according to a report adopted by the EP. Türkiye's strategic and geopolitical importance for the European Union could not make up for the fundamental democratic shortcomings, or indeed backsliding. The EU's accession criteria such as the rule of law, democracy, stable institutions, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, good neighbourly relations, compliance with international law and alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy were not up for negotiation. The suppression of critical voices in Türkiye, referred to as relentless, was said to be highly concerning. The arrest of the mayor of the metropolitan municipality of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu, has been referred to as a politically-motivated move, and the actions taken by the security authorities in the peaceful mass protests, as well as the prosecution of hundreds of protesters through hasty mass trials, has met with criticism (cf. BN of 24.03. - 05.05.2025).³¹

Dissolution of the PKK and end of armed conflict

A statement by the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was released on 09.05.2025. The PKK was said to have taken historic decisions during its congress held between 05.05. and 07.05.25. Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated in a speech held on 10.05.25 that the country was advancing with a confident stride on the road to a "terror-free Türkiye". On 12.05.2025, the PKK announced its dissolution and the end of the armed struggle. The PKK would lay down its arms as part of a peace initiative with Türkiye.³²

Tunisia

Second "conspiracy trial" against opposition figures opens

A new trial began on 06.05.25 against almost two dozen Tunisian opposition figures accused of conspiracy against state security, only a few weeks after in some cases long prison sentences had been handed down on almost 40 defendants on similar charges in a separate mass trial (cf. BN of 28.04.25). The trial, which has been referred to as

“Conspiracy Against State Security 2”, is said to concern 22 defendants, including 83-year-old Ennahdha party leader Rached Ghannouchi, who has been in detention since April 2023 and has already been sentenced to 22 years in prison in another case. According to the court files, former prime minister Youssef Chahed and former chief of staff to the president Nadia Akacha are also among the accused. The defendants are said to be accused amongst other things of terrorism, incitement to murder and “plotting against state internal security”. The fifth counter-terrorism chamber of Tunis Court of First Instance is said to have ruled to adjourn the hearing to 27 May. A motion for the defendants’ release had been rejected, as a source in the judiciary stated to the Tunis Afrique Presse news agency.³³

Ukraine

Ceasefire efforts

After president Putin according to reports called for Ukraine to honour a three-day ceasefire for the Victory Day events (08.05.-10.05.25), and rejected president Zelenskyy’s proposal for a 30-day ceasefire, Kyiv has accused the Kremlin of not being serious about peace. According to reports, a Ukrainian opposition MP was quoted as stating: “Ukraine is saying nothing officially, but has also joined the ceasefire. The armed forces have received the appropriate orders.” According to media reports, both sides subsequently accused one another of violating the ceasefire. After a phone call between presidents Trump and Zelenskyy on 08.05.25, Trump reportedly called for a 30-day unconditional ceasefire, and threatened to impose further sanctions were it not to come about. One day previously, US vice president Vance had called for direct negotiations between the two warring parties and criticised Russia for “asking too much”.

After a meeting of the heads of state and government of the UK, France, Germany and Poland, together with president Zelenskyy, in Kyiv on 10.05., during which a joint phone call was also made to US president Trump, according to reports an ultimatum was issued to the Russian Federation (RF) to agree to a 30-day ceasefire with Ukraine from 12.05.25 onwards or face increased sanctions, including against the energy and banking sectors. President Putin is said to have thereupon rejected a ceasefire, but in turn to have proposed holding direct negotiations with Ukraine in Istanbul on 15.05.25 to negotiate on a ceasefire. After this in turn had been rejected by the European allies as “far from sufficient”, Trump had called on Zelenskyy to meet Putin in Türkiye. On 11.05.25, president Zelenskyy told the Russian president that he was willing to meet him on 15.05.25 in Istanbul, and was now awaiting a response from Moscow. It was seemingly not clear if Zelenskyy was conditioning his journey to Istanbul on the ceasefire holding from 12.05.25 onwards. The Kremlin had also avoided comment on this matter so far. The Russian side had in the meantime resumed attacks on Ukraine on 11.05.25 after the three-day ceasefire, to which both sides had not adhered at all times.

According to media information, the Ukrainian parliament ratified on 08.05.25 the minerals deal between Ukraine and the USA (cf. BN of 05.05.25). This means that technical agreements will still have to be drawn up in the coming weeks and signed by both parties.³⁴

Civilian victims

According to official Ukrainian sources, three people died on 05.05.25 as a result of Russian fire in Sumy oblast. According to information from Kyiv’s mayor Vitali Klitschko, two persons were killed on 07.05.25 in a Russian drone strike on Kyiv. According to official information of 08.05.25, one person died in Russian attacks in Sumy oblast and six in Donezk oblast. According to media information of 09.05.25, one person died as a result of Russian attacks in each of Donezk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts. According to Ukrainian official sources of 11.05.25, one civilian died in Kherson on that day, and a total of three persons had lost their lives in Sumy oblast in the preceding days.³⁵

Prisoner exchange, espionage and sanctions stemming from use of CS gas

According to media information, 205 prisoners of war from each side were swapped on 06.05.25. The exchange had come about with mediation from the UAE.

According to media reports of 09.05.25, the Ukrainian security service SBU has arrested two former Ukrainian soldiers accused of spying for Hungary. They are reported to have collected information on Ukrainian defensive capacities and air defences in Ukraine’s southwestern Zakarpattia oblast, which is home to a Hungarian minority.

The rights of the Hungarian minority are said to have been a bone of contention between Ukraine and Hungary for some time.

According to reports of 06.05.25, the Council of the EU has prepared a new sanctions regulation which, for the first time, formally accuses the RF of using CS gas during attacks in 2024 in Dnipropetrovsk oblast. This move is reportedly based on two reports by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons which were published at Ukraine's request in November 2024 and February 2025, respectively. CS is a tear gas which is prohibited by Article 1 of the Chemical Weapons Convention.³⁶

Meeting of foreign ministers in Ukraine: special tribunal and defence

According to reports, an informal meeting of the Ukrainian foreign minister with the foreign ministers of the EU member states held in Lviv in western Ukraine on 09.05.25 decided to formally endorse the establishment of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. The international tribunal would have its seat in The Hague. According to the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs Kaja Kallas, the tribunal is to "ensure that those most responsible for the aggression against Ukraine are held accountable". The EU had also approved 1 billion EUR from the proceeds of frozen Russian assets for the Ukrainian arms industry.³⁷

Venezuela

Opposition members sheltering in diplomatic compound leave Venezuela

According to media reports, the five staff members working for the opposition's presidential campaign who had been seeking asylum in the Argentinian embassy for more than a year have left Venezuela. They are reported to have arrived in the USA on 06.05.25. Whilst US secretary of state Rubio described the event as a rescue operation, Venezuelan interior minister Cabello attributes the exit to negotiations. A sixth staff member surrendered to the authorities several months ago, and died under house arrest in February 2025 as a result of illness.³⁸

Yemen

Ceasefire between USA and Houthis

On 06.05.25, US president Trump announced that the Houthis had "capitulated". The backdrop to this announcement is a ceasefire agreement between the Houthis and the US administration putting an end to the ongoing US airstrikes which had claimed the lives of at least 250 people since March 2025. Under the agreement, the Houthis will stop attacking US ships in the Red Sea. Since however this only meets one of the USA's three main demands (cessation of attacks on US ships, resumption of the peace process with Saudi Arabia, and an end to attacks on Israel), many on the international stage regard the agreement as a de facto victory for the Houthis, as it has allowed them to eliminate the USA as a strategic opponent without changing their positions in a relevant way. The restriction of the ceasefire to ships sailing under a US flag also ensures that the Red Sea will continue to be a de facto high-risk area for international maritime trade.³⁹

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