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Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

24 July 2017

Egypt

Death sentences

On 22 July 2016 28 suspected Islamists were sentenced to death for assassinating the attorney general Hisham Barakat in June 2015. 38 co-defendants received prison sentences between ten years and life. 16 defendants were tried in absentia. The government announced that the convicted persons are supporters of ousted President Mursi. The sentences can be appealed.

Afghanistan

UN report on civilian victims

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) published its semi-annual report about the conflict's civilian victims last week. The report says that between 01 January and 30 June 2017 the number of civilian victims was roughly the same as in the reference period 2016. In the first half of 2017 UNAMA registered 5,243 civilians as dead or injured, in the first half of 2016 the number was 5,267 (for the full year 2016: 11,418).

Other than in previous years when ground fighting claimed most casualties, most of the civilians became the victims of bombings and related attacks in the first six months of 2017. Ground fighting was the second most frequent cause.

UNAMA recorded the highest number of civilian victims in the following provinces: Kabul, Helmand, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Uruzgan, Faryab, Herat, Laghman, Kunduz, and Farah. This is the first time that the report includes an annex showing the number of victims in the different provinces.

Armed confrontations

The fighting, purges, and raids by the security forces continue as well as the ambushes and attacks of the insurgents which sometimes also kill or injure civilians. According to media reports the following provinces were affected in the last two weeks: Helmand (south, reportedly government troops reconquered the entire Nawa district and started a coordinated offensive in Greshk district), Zabul, Uruzgan (south), Nangarhar (east, where IS reportedly has occupied 70 % of the area around Tora Bora), Faryab (north), Logar (centre) as well as Ghazni (southeast).

Assaults and attacks

On 17 July 2017 unknown gunmen shot a cleric in Khogyani district in Nangarhar province (east). Two policemen died in a bomb attack in the southern province of Nimroz (Chakhansoor district).

On 18 July 2017 three civilians became victims of bomb attacks and fighting in Herat province (west).

On 20 July 2017 at least six missiles hit Paghman district in Kabul province without causing any damage to people and property. The incident occurred near the residence of the former MP and mujahideen commander Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf, who recently strongly criticized the Taliban. In Nangarhar (east) girl lost both legs in the explosion of a roadside bomb.

35 people were killed and 42 wounded by a suicide bombing with a car in a predominantly Hazara district in western Kabul on 24 July 2017. So far no-one claimed responsibility for the bombing.

New criminal code makes „Bacha Bazi“ a criminal offence

Afghanistan's cabinet adopted the draft of a new criminal code which among other things makes the sexual exploitation of boys (so-called boys games „Bacha Bazi“) a criminal offence. The law must still be passed by the parliament.

China

Liu Xia's whereabouts unknown

Since the death of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo (see BN of 17 July 2017) observers have been concerned about his wife Liu Xia who is under house arrest. There has been no sign of life from her since 15 July 2017. The authorities refuse to provide any information about her whereabouts. The media reported that the authorities took her for a "vacation" to Yunnan province on 19 July 2017. Several western states and human rights activists have urged the Chinese government to allow Liu Xia to leave the country.

Iraq

Mosul: Human rights violations by the security forces

AP news agency reported on 20 July 2017 that several Iraqi soldiers admitted massive human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings of suspected IS members or their families. They said that this was justified because of the fight against IS and none of them expected to be prosecuted for this.

Tal Afar: IS withdraws

According to findings of 23 July 2017 it seems that IS evacuated its fighters from the city of Tal Afar. Probably this is a response to higher losses by more precise air strikes in recent weeks. Tal Afar is a dominantly Shia, Turkmen speaking enclave within a dominantly Sunni Arab region.

Iran/Iraq

Expansion of security cooperation

Both countries are considering closer cooperation in security matters. On 23 July 2017 Iranian media reported the signing of a cooperation agreement to fight terrorism. Closer cooperation is also envisaged for border controls and military training.

Israel/Palestinian Autonomous Areas

Violent clashes on the Temple Mount

More than 20 Palestinians were wounded during renewed violent clashes on the Temple Mount (Haram-al Sharif) in Jerusalem on 20 July 2017. The situation escalated because of stricter security checks of Muslims at the Temple Mount. The metal detector checks that the Palestinians reject, were introduced by Israel on 23 July 2017 after an attack in which three Israeli Arabs shot dead two Israeli policemen at an access gate to the Temple Mount on 21 July 2017. Both were subsequently shot as well. Palestinian representatives had called Muslims to prayers on the Temple Mount on 21 July 2017.

Cameroon

AI: Massive assaults on suspected Boko Haram members

In a report (Cameroon's secret torture chambers: Human rights violations and war crimes in the fight against Boko Haram) published on 20 July 2017, the human rights organization Amnesty International (ai) documents 101 cases of persons who were secretly held and seriously tortured by the security forces on charges of supporting the Boko Haram terror organization between March 2013 and March 2017. 32 of the 101 victims said that they had witnessed other prisoners being tortured to death. In the cases documented, which often lacked sufficient evidence for any involvement with Boko Haram, tortures had been inflicted at more than 20 sites. The overwhelming majority of abuse happened at the headquarters of the military elite

unit Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) in Salak (Far North region) and a facility run by the General Directorate of External Research (DGRE), Cameroon's intelligence services abroad, situated close to the country's parliament in Yaoundé. ai estimates that Boko Haram has killed over 1,500 civilians in Cameroon since 2014, and abducted many others.

Qatar

Concessions in the crisis in the Persian Gulf

Qatar announced changes in its anti-terror legislation in relation to its disputes with several Arab countries. The Emir signed the corresponding decree on 20 July 2017. The decree is said to contain two national lists with the names of individuals and terrorist groups. Suspects will have the right to object when they are listed. Furthermore the terms "terrorist", „terrorist crimes and units“ as well as „funding terrorism“ are defined. These changes are meant to ameliorate the Gulf crisis. On 05 June 2017 Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt had broken off diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed a transport and trade blockade. They are accusing Qatar of supporting terrorist groups and of being too close to Iran.

Morocco

Mass protest in Al Hoceima prevented

On 20 July 2017 security forces blocked access to the city of Al Hoceima (north) for many potential protesters who wanted to join the march against poor conditions in the education and health system, corruption and abuse of powers by authorities as well as the release of government critics. Protesters threw cobblestones when the march was disbanded by the police using tear gas and batons. Eleven protesters and over 70 police are said to have suffered injuries. The march had been planned for a long time already, but the regional government banned it, because the organizers were afraid that they would be unable to control a mass protest.

Nigeria

Boko Haram: Suicide bombings in Maiduguri

The police informed that on 17 July 2017 a female suicide bomber blew herself up near a mosque in the London-Ciki suburb of the city of Maiduguri killing 8 people and wounding 18. Only a few hours earlier the explosives belt of another female assassin had exploded on the outskirts of Maiduguri when the police shot at her. On 16 July 2017 the police stopped two young female suicide bombers who intended to enter the village of Mammati (near Maiduguri), their explosives belts blew up in the process and killed them.

Pakistan

Death sentence for blasphemy on Facebook

Because of a discussion on Facebook about Islam and the prophet a court in Bahawalpur (Punjab) sentenced a man to death for blasphemy.

Philippines

Martial law extended

On 22 July 2017 the parliament approved the extension of martial law on Mindanao island (approx. 95,000 sqkm) until 31 December 2017 requested as by President Rodrigo Duterte. After Islamist rebels had attacked the city of Marawi in May 2017 Duterte had imposed martial law on the island for 60 days. The conflict around the city continues. More than 500,000 people have so far fled the city and its surroundings, almost 600 people have been killed.

Somalia

Attacks

Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the murder of a Somali soldier in Beledweyne (Hiiraan region) 16 July 2017, for attacks with booby traps on Somali and Kenyan soldiers near Kismayo (Juba region) on 16 July 2017 (unconfirmed), and on AMISOM soldiers near the city of Mahaday (Middle Shabelle) on 17 July 2017, on a Somali army convoy in Yantoy (Lower Juba region) on 19 July 2017 and for firing mortar shells at the Jowhar airport (Middle Shabelle region) on 21 July 2017. At least four soldiers in a convoy of the Interim South West Administration (regions of Bay, Bakool and Lower Shabelle) were killed by a booby trap near Baidoa (Bay region) and several were injured on 23 July 2017. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for this attack as well.

Fighting

On 16 July 2017 Kenyan aircraft attacked al-Shabaab bases near Garbahare (Gedo region).

Supported by the Somali army, security forces of the Interim South West Administration (Bay, Bakool and Lower Shabelle regions) started an operation to retake the al-Shabaab strongholds between the cities of Bardale and Baidoa (Bay region) on 19 July 2017. It is reported that soldiers of the Kenyan army and security forces of the Interim Jubaland Administration (Gedo, Lower and Middle Juba regions) in a raiding patrol on 19 July 2017 killed an al-Shabaab leader who had been responsible for the extremists' operations in this region, in Dhobley, Afmadow district (Lower Juba region). On 21 July 2017 al-Shabaab took control of the village of Bulogud near Kismayo (Lower Juba region). On 21 July 2017 the Somali army destroyed an al-Shabaab base in the village of Tortorow near Afoi (Lower Shabelle region) that had served as a base for attacks in the Lower Shabelle and Bay regions. At least five people died in clashes between the villagers of Herale (Galgudud region) and fighters of the Sufitic Islamist militia Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a (ASWJ) on 20 and 21 July 2017.

Staff of relief organizations abducted

On 15 July 2017 al-Shabaab abducted seven staff members of a local relief organization in the village of Garsata near Baido (Bay region). It is said that the extremists are demanding USD20,000 as ransom for their hostages. Four Somali workers of another NGO were abducted near Beledweyne (Hiiraan region) on 21 July 2017.

Foreign fighter executed

On 17 July 2017 al-Shabaab executed one of its foreign fighters. He was a Kenyan who reportedly complained to a commander of the extremists about al-Shabaab's tactics in eastern Kenya.

Turkey

Trial against newspaper staff

The trial against 17 staff members of Cumhuriyet, one of the last independent newspapers, started on 24 July 2017. They are accused of having propagated the Gülen movement, the PKK and DHKP/C and thus having supported terrorist organizations. Eleven defendants are in pretrial detention, six have been conditionally released or went underground.

Erdogan refuses to tolerate any interference by Germany

President Erdogan demanded that German Foreign Minister Gabriel refrain from interfering with Turkish affairs. His government spokesman also accused the German government of attempting to influence the judiciary. This was Turkey's reaction to Foreign Minister Gabriel's remarks last week. In response to the arrest of human rights activists he had stepped up the travel warnings and announced that German investment credits and military aid should be reviewed.

Extension of the state of emergency

The state of emergency was extended for the fourth time one year after the coup attempt. On 17 July 2017 the majority in parliament voted for the government's order to extend the state of emergency for another three months until 19 October 2017. The state of emergency enables President Erdogan to rule almost exclusively

by decrees. The opposition criticized the fact that the special regulations had meanwhile become a permanent feature.

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ivs-anfragen@bamf.bund.de