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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

19 June 2023

Afghanistan

Security situation: Al-Qaida training camp; resettlement of TTP fighters from Pakistan

In its latest report of 09.06.23 the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team disclosed the existence of al-Qaida training camps in five provinces (Helmand, Zabul, Nuristan, Nangarhar and Badghis) and of 'safe houses' in Farah, Helmand, Herat, and Kabul. Between 30 and 60 mostly senior figures are believed to be active in Kabul, Kandahar, Helmand, and Kunar. A further 400 al-Qaida fighters and an estimated 1,600 family members and supporters are apparently operating in the south, east and centre of the country.

The UN team also reported that several al-Qaida members were serving as senior officials within the Taliban's government. For example, the current Taliban governor in Nuristan, Hafiz Muhammad Agha Hakeem, was identified by the sanctions and monitoring team as an al-Qaida leader. According to the report, the training camp in Nuristan was specifically designed 'for the training of suicide bombers'. An al-Qaida 'safe house' in Kabul had been uncovered in July 2022 when the USA killed Ayman al Zawahiri, the co-founder and former emir of al-Qaida, in a drone strike (cf. BN of 08.08.22).

According to media reports on 15.06.23, around 300 Pakistani Taliban fighters (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan or TTP) have been resettled by the Taliban to Takhar province (Dasht-e Qala district). Recently, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed that TTP members are being resettled to Afghanistan, particularly to the north and north-east of the country, following an agreement between the Taliban and the Pakistani government.

Persecution situation

A report published by Amnesty International on 07.06.23 highlights numerous extrajudicial arrests and killings of people by the Taliban in the Panjshir Valley between June 2022 and May 2023 and describes the Taliban's violence against civilians in the province as collective punishment for the attacks on the Taliban by the National Resistance Front (NRF). On 12.06.23 information circulated that an 84-year-old right-wing Austrian national was arrested by the Taliban. He is accused of espionage.

On 13.06.23, the Taliban shot dead three men accused of raping and killing a woman in Herat province. It is unclear whether a trial has taken place.

Government leadership

Three representatives of the Taliban's ministries of interior, foreign affairs and defence have travelled to the Oslo Freedom Forum (13.06.-15.06.23). They are to engage in dialogue with Afghan civil society in exile and representatives of other countries.

In a statement on 19.06.23, the Taliban declared 31.08.21, the day on which the last US soldiers left Afghanistan, a national holiday.

According to a media report on 14.06.23, the head of the Taliban's moral police in Herat has ordered wedding hall owners to allow the playing of simple drums at wedding ceremonies, but not bells. He has instructed wedding hall

owners in the city to identify women who are not properly veiled during wedding events. In a recent announcement, the Taliban stated: "Any form of music is forbidden in wedding halls. Playing simple drums is allowed, but bells are forbidden. Men and grooms are not allowed to enter the women's section. Filming, photographing, and taking mobile phones into the women's hall is forbidden. The distribution of food during prayers, especially on Fridays, is forbidden".

Humanitarian situation

According to the Taliban, a severe drought in Herat province has reduced the rice harvest by 80 percent this year. At the same time, several districts in Badakhshan province have been off by heavy rains and flooding.

Angola

Over 25,000 cases of domestic violence

The minister for social action, family and promotion of women, Ana Paula Sacramento Neto, said in a speech on 13.06.23 that in 2022, family counselling centres nationwide registered over 25,000 cases of domestic violence, including over 17,000 incidents against children. The types of violence, the majority of which are directed against female victims, range from physical, sexual, or psychological to economic violence. Neto stressed the need for prevention and protection measures and launched a campaign to revise the draft law on domestic violence.

Bangladesh

Petition for the release of persons arrested on the basis of the DSA

More than 30 NGOs have issued a joint statement calling for the immediate release of all those detained under the controversial Digital Security Act (DSA).

Opposition BNP launches one-point movement against government

The opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) plans to launch its one-point movement in July 2023 demanding the resignation of the ruling Awami League and new nationwide elections under a neutral caretaker government. The BNP has also listed 500 security forces that it claims have been involved in political repression in recent years, such as obstruction of opposition party programmes, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings of opposition politicians and media workers.

Controversies surrounding Jamaat-e-Islami

The resurgence of the Jamaat-e-Islami has been met with criticism. The party held a rally in Dhaka on 10.06.23 for the first time since 2013. The official permission was for an indoor gathering. However, as the event progressed, it turned into an open-air rally.

The predecessor party had actively opposed the creation of Bangladesh and its separation from Pakistan in former East Pakistan in the 1970s. The current successor party, Jamaat-e-Islami, continues to advocate the Islamisation of Bangladesh's political system and the reunification of the country with Pakistan. Like the BNP, it calls for the establishment of a neutral caretaker government to hold new elections. The party had been banned from politics in 2013. Its membership has tripled since 2000 to around 73,000, according to police and party documents.

Benin

Strengthening the military in the north

The army completed the first phase of an extraordinary recruitment campaign in mid-June 2023. According to recent media reports, the first 3,500 new recruits will be deployed to fight against terrorism in the north of the country. One of the selection criteria is that candidates must speak at least one of the languages spoken in the region. Training will last six months and take place in the garrisons of Dassa, Djougou, Tanguiéta, Bembéréké and Kandi. The mobilisation of a further 1,500 is already planned.