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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

21 November 2022

Afghanistan

Security situation

It was reported in the media on 17.11.22 that a cleric and two other persons had been shot dead by unknown attackers close to the Abu Bakr Siddique mosque in Kabul. In the wake of clashes between Pakistani and Afghan border soldiers on 13.11.22 (cf. BN of 15.11.22), the Taliban have disclaimed responsibility for the incident. It was reported on 15.11.22 that an Afghan civilian had been shot dead by Pakistani border soldiers. The border disputes reportedly continued on 20.11.22, with civilian injuries. Fighting occurred in a district of the city of Herat with a predominantly Hazara population on 15.11.22. According to information from the Taliban, a hideout of the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) was discovered and five members of the group were killed. Several prisoner transport vehicles of the Taliban were damaged when they passed over land mines in Takhar province on 16.11.22. Local observers claim that five prisoners were injured. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack to date. An unexplained explosion also occurred in Mazar-e Sharif on 15.11.22, injuring five civilians.

Persecution and governance

It was reported on 21.11.22 that the Taliban has announced its intention to choose the topics for Friday sermons in mosques. In future, no prayer leader will be entitled to give a speech at their own discretion. Rather, the contents of sermons are to be in conformity with the Taliban's ideology. According to reports in the media on 19.11.22, the Taliban supreme court has announced that ten men and nine women each received 39 lashes in the city of Toloqan (Takhar province) for "Adultery, running away from home or theft" on 11.11.22. It was reported on 17.11.22 that a boy and a girl had been publicly flogged by the Taliban on charges of having a pre-marital relationship. The Taliban prohibited spectators from photographing or videoing the punishment. A women's rights activist disappeared in Kabul on 15.11.22 after posting a message in social media that the Taliban were standing behind her house. It was reported on 15.11.22 that the Taliban had tortured and killed a former police officer in Kunar province.

Angola

Demonstrations in support of activists stopped

According to a report in the media, the police stopped a peaceful march in Luanda on 19.11.22 in which demonstrators were calling for the release of the activists Luther Campos and Tanaece Neutro (both pseudonyms). Two demonstrators were reportedly seriously injured as a result of the police operation. According to varying sources, eleven or 22 participants were temporarily detained. The police claim that the march had not been approved.

Gilson da Silva Moreira, who is known as Tanaece Neutro, was arrested on 14.01.22 after allegedly having insulted the authorities in a video broadcast live in social media in which he called for the release of Luther Campos, who had been arrested several days previously. He was sentenced in October 2022 to a suspended prison term and a

fine, and required to make a public apology to the country's president. Tanaece Neutro, whose health has reportedly deteriorated, remains in custody. He has let the deadline for the apology pass. In addition, the public prosecutor's office has lodged an appeal. Luther Campos is still awaiting his court hearing, which was recently postponed due to a strike in the judiciary.

Bangladesh

Internet censorship

In a study of worldwide internet freedom conducted by Proxyrack, Bangladesh ranks fourth among the countries with the highest levels of internet censorship, followed by Egypt in third place, Iran in second place and China in first place.

China

Violent protests against COVID-19 measures

Protests against the infection control measures imposed under China's zero Covid policy occurred in the Haizhu district of the megacity of Guangzhou in southern China on 14.11.22. Hundreds of people tore down barriers which had been installed around housing complexes, attacked disease control personnel and police and looted food supplies. Residents affected by a strict lockdown with curfew which has been in force in parts of Guangzhou for some weeks are suffering from an inadequate supply of food, soaring prices and loss of pay. The authorities have not commented on the incidents. It is not known how long the protests continued or whether any arrests were made. Seven people were arrested following protests and clashes with government agency staff in the city of Linyi in north-eastern China on 08.11.22.

Colombia

18 die in armed clashes between FARC dissident groups in Putumayo

On 20.11.22 the national ombudsman's office and the authorities of Putumayo released information on one of the most lethal clashes between two armed groups this year. According to present knowledge, clashes on the previous day between the two FARC dissident groups Carolina Ramírez Front and Comandos de la Frontera in the villages of Los Pinos and Las Delicias (municipality of Puerto Guzmán, Putumayo) claimed the lives of 18 people and displaced at least 15 families.

DR Congo

Situation for Rwandan-speaking ethnic Tutsis; M23 advance in North Kivu; forced recruitment

Contrary to previously released information, Africanews reported on 20.11.22 that numerous Kinyarwanda speakers, such as ethnic Tutsi and Banyamulenge, have been killed in the past two months. The Congolese president, Félix Tshisekedi, recently guaranteed these groups protection (cf. BN of 15.11.22). The victims were reportedly suspected of being allies of the allegedly Rwanda-backed rebel group Mouvement du 23-Mars (M23), whose members are predominantly of Tutsi origin. M23, which holds extensive territories along the borders with Rwanda and Uganda in North Kivu (cf. BN of 07.11.22), has continued its advance in Rutshuru Territory and most recently in parts of Nyiragongo Territory, and is heading in the direction of the provincial capital of Goma, a city with a population of around two million. Isolated sources refer to forced recruitment by the M23 rebels in the territories under their control.

UNCHR calls for a halt to compulsory expulsions and removals to the eastern Kivu provinces and Ituri

Referring to a revised UNHCR position paper on returns to eastern provinces of DR Congo, Elizabeth Tan, Director of International Protection, appealed to the international community on 18.11.22 to halt compulsory expulsions and removals of Congolese nationals, including rejected asylum seekers, to the conflict-ridden provinces of North

Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri in the east of DR Congo. The UNHCR has expressed concern at the increasing attacks on the civilian population and internally displaced people in eastern Congo, which have claimed more than 1,000 civilian lives since February 2022. Since the beginning of 2022, the UNHCR has recorded more than 50,000 violations of legally protected rights concerning civilians, including internally displaced people and refugees. The number of internally displaced people continues to rise. Prior to the latest large-scale waves of displacements resulting from the continuing fighting between M23 and the Congolese armed forces, the UNHCR had already put the number of internally displaced people at 5.6 million, the Kivu provinces and Ituri alone accounting for an estimated 4.9 million of this total. It states that more than a million people have additionally fled abroad. There is a substantial need for emergency humanitarian relief and access is considerably restricted. The UNHCR describes DR Congo as one of its most underfunded operations worldwide (cf. BN of 08.08.22).

New cases of excessive force used by police against opposition figures and demonstrators

According to a report in the media, police prevented a gathering of supporters of the opposition party Engagement pour la Citoyenneté et le Développement (ECiDé) to welcome ECiDé leader Martin Fauyuluat at N'djili airport on 13.11.22. The gathering had been registered but prohibited in advance by the relevant authority. According to UN radio station Okapi, ECiDé party leadership member Valéry Mpoy described the police's actions as brutal and spoke of excessive force being used. The party's supporters were allegedly subjected to widespread physical violence and tear gas was used to drive them apart. He said that he and ECiDé's deputy secretary-general, Faustin Kwakwa, had been brutally beaten up and injured, as had two other ECiDé party members.

Citing the network for human rights (REDHO), Okapi has also reported that four people have been killed in the space of two months as a result of the police using live ammunition at demonstrations in Butembo (North Kivu).

El Salvador

Report: High numbers of disappearances under the Bukele government

In a report published on 15.11.22 (Las desapariciones en El Salvador: el continuum de la impunidad) the observatory for human rights (OUDH) at José Simeón Cañas Central American University (UCA) criticises the marked rise in the number of disappearances in the country since the Bukele government assumed power, compared to the situation under previous governments. According to information from the national police, 4,060 such cases were recorded between January 2020 and June 2022; more than 1,440 people are still missing and 255 people have been found dead. Enforced disappearances have commonly been used by various actors throughout the country's past as a means of asserting their aims. Current perpetrators include gangs (maras/pandillas), who employ the practice to cover up crimes which they have committed, for example.

Eritrea

Arrest of church members

A Christian human rights organisation reported on 17.11.22 that the Eritrean authorities arrested 150 believers in a raid on a prayer group of a non-state-approved church community in the Godaif district of the capital, Asmara, in September 2022. While a number of women with children have since been released, 98 believers are reportedly still being held at the prison in Mai Serwa.

Secularism is considered to be one of the most important pillars of the Eritrean state. Only the Eritrean Orthodox church, the Catholic church, the Evangelical Lutheran church and Sunni Islam are recognised by the state.

Ethiopia / Eritrea

Humanitarian aid reaches Tigray

On 16.11.22 a WFP aid convoy reached Tigray for the first time since the peace accord was signed on 02.11.22 (cf. BN of 07.11.22 and 15.11.22). The WFP reports that 15 trucks have arrived in the region and further trucks are expected in the coming days. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had managed to deliver medical relief supplies to Tigray's regional capital, Mekelle, the day before.

According to information from the WHO, around 89 % of Tigray's population, which totals a good seven million, do not have adequate access to food. The resumption of relief supplies was agreed in the peace accord, prior to which the Ethiopian government had blocked all transport routes to Tigray for almost two years. As recently as September 2022, the UN had accused the Ethiopian government of weaponising hunger. Many of the estimated 500,000 deaths in the conflict are believed to have resulted from hunger and a lack of medical care. Informed observers see the catastrophic supply situation in Tigray as the main reason why the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) made substantial concessions to the Ethiopian government in the peace negotiations, including an undertaking to demobilise its own troops and to cede control of the regional capital, Mekelle, to the Ethiopian army.

No indications that Eritrean forces are leaving Tigray

In return for the disarmament of Tigrayan militias, the Eritrean army is supposed to withdraw to Eritrea. There are no indications of any such withdrawal as yet. Rather, Tigrayan sources are reporting the stationing of new units, continuing artillery shelling with civilian deaths and looting by the Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF). On 17.11.22 the US government announced that further economic sanctions would be imposed on Eritrea (cf. BN of 29.03.21 and 15.11.21), should the withdrawal of the EDF fail to be ordered. For its part, the TPLF stated on 18.11.22 that it would only lay down its arms when the Ethiopian government had officially confirmed the complete withdrawal of the Eritrean military.

The Gambia

Situation for the mentally ill, mental healthcare

Omar Bojang, senior psychiatric specialist at the country's only state psychiatric institution, which goes by the name of Tanka Tanka, has told the Gambian newspaper The Voice that mentally ill people are subjected to discrimination, exclusion and stigmatisation in Gambian hospitals. The director of the Gambian health service, Dr. Mustapha Bitayye, denied this and stressed that all segments of the population in The Gambia enjoyed access to healthcare without any discrimination. Bojang spoke about the challenges at Tanka Tanka, including intermittent shortages of medicines, an inadequate supply of food and poor sanitary and hygiene conditions. A report in the media at the beginning of November mentioned the inadequate provision of mental healthcare in The Gambia and the shortage of psychiatric specialists at Tanka Tanka. The report points out that the Lunatics' Detention Act of 1917 is still in force and incompatible with international human rights standards. Further recent reports in the media citing Boyang reveal that a total of 73 patients were receiving treatment at Tanka Tanka as per October 2022 and that in-patients are discharged after no longer than one month.

Food insecurity intensifying

According to a report in the media published in October 2022 which refers to the National Food Security Survey (NFSS), around 27 % of the total population are exposed to food insecurity in 2022. This represents a two-fold increase in the number of people exposed to food insecurity compared to the previous year of 2021 (cf. BN of 17.01.22). The WFP states that The Gambia is currently experiencing the worst famines for ten years (cf. BN of 12.09.22).

Guatemala

Judiciary: Another judge resigns and leaves the country

The well-known anti-corruption judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez publicly announced his resignation on 15.11.22. He cited the judiciary's lack of independence and the absence of guarantees of due process as the grounds for his resignation. Numerous judges and lawyers, including a number of employees of the special public prosecutor's office for exemption from punishment, have gone into exile on account of their work or been arrested during president Giammattei's tenure. A large proportion of the more than two dozen judges and lawyers who have gone into exile since October 2019 have stated that they left the country on account of attacks, threats and the criminalisation of their work, in particular in connection with investigations into corruption. Gálvez was also

exposed to such activities and said after recently attending a conference abroad that he would not be returning for the time being for reasons of safety.

Guinea-Bissau

PAIGC congress

The congress of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), which had been postponed several times after being banned by the judiciary and stopped by the authorities (see BN of 21.03.22 and 22.08.22), took place from 18.11. to 20.11.22. Domingos Simões Pereira saw off all contenders and was re-elected as the party's leader for four years.

The congress was interrupted on 18.11.22 when the police forced their way into the venue with the aim of arresting the former prime minister, Aristides Gomes. Following the disputed run-off for the presidency on 29.01.19 (cf. BN of 13.01.20 and 02.03.20), Gomes was dismissed as prime minister by the official winner of the election, president Umaro Sissoco Embaló. He subsequently spent a year with the UN in Bissau before leaving the country in February 2021. He had re-entered the country specifically to attend the congress, for which he had obtained permission from the authorities, according to a PAIGC press spokesperson. Gomes apparently managed to leave the congress. His whereabouts are unknown, according to the press spokesperson, who said that the police forcing their way into the congress was seen as an act of aggression against the PAIGC.

Haiti

Cholera outbreak worsening

The cholera outbreak in the country (cf. BN of 17.10.22) is continually worsening, according to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Citing the Haitian health authorities, on 16.11.22 the organisation reported 700 confirmed cases already to date, more than 140 deaths attributable to cholera and more than 7,000 suspect cases since the beginning of October. In this connection, a fact sheet published by OCHA on 11.11.22 and similarly based on information from the health ministry (Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population, MSPP) pointed to an increase of more than 70 % in suspected cases between 03.11. and 11.11.22. Over 6,300 people had been admitted to cholera treatment centres at this point in time. Doctors Without Borders reports a lack of vaccine doses and substantial problems in the areas of general healthcare and drinking water supplies and refuse disposal which are attributable in part to fuel shortages. These restrictions could worsen the current humanitarian situation against the backdrop of the prevailing security and economic crisis.

Iran

Protests continue: People killed and injured in clashes

Following calls to action in social media, protest actions in memory of demonstrators killed in the 2019 November protests have been ongoing since 16.11.22. Violent clashes have reportedly occurred in the course of these protests. According to information from human rights organisations, at least five demonstrators were killed by security forces in the north-west of the country on 16.11.22. Security forces allegedly used live ammunition against protesters in the city of Bukan (West Azerbaijan province) and in Sanandaj and Divandarreh (Kordestan province). There have reportedly also been deaths and injuries among the security forces and the Basij militia which is being deployed to fight the uprising. The locations in which such casualties have been incurred include Mashad (Razavi Khorasan), Sanandaj, Isfahan and Saravan (Sistan and Baluchestan).

According to reports in the media, Mahabad (West Azerbaijan) was the scene of particularly violent clashes in 19.11. and 20.11.22. Police and security forces entered this city in military convoys. Eye witnesses have reported that these state actors fired indiscriminately at demonstrators who were erecting road blockades and taking part in sit-down strikes. Numerous people are said to have been injured as a result. It remains unclear whether anyone was killed. It has not been possible to independently verify information on this matter. Media close to the government have reported in this connection that armed groups had set fire to private buildings and public amenities and thrown the city into a state of panic. A number of leaders have apparently been convicted and imprisoned. A north-western

base of the Revolutionary Guards announced on 20.11.22 that it would be bolstering its presence in the West Azerbaijan region. The Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, stressed in a statement on 20.11.22 that decisive action would be taken against rioters. According to reports in the media, provisional death sentences have since been handed down to six people in connection with the protests.

Suspected terrorist attack in Khuzestan province

Unknown individuals wielding assault rifles shot at a group of people from motorcycles in the city of Izeh (Khuzestan) on 16.11.22. A state news agency has described the incident as a terrorist attack. According to varying reports, between six and nine people, including two children and supposedly also members of the law enforcement forces, were killed near to a shopping centre. Around 15 people were injured. It is as yet unclear who was responsible for the attack. Eye witnesses have reportedly discounted reports by the state media, claiming that it was not terrorists but rather security forces who opened fire. A letter from the IS terrorist organisation claiming responsibility for the attack which circulated briefly in state media has been deemed a forgery by foreign news portals.

Iraq

The struggle against IS

IS attacked an Iraqi army outpost in northern Kirkuk on 19.11.22. Both the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the government in Baghdad lay claim to this territory. There were at least four fatalities on the Iraqi side.

Iranian attacks

The Revolutionary Guards launched a new wave of drone and artillery attacks on targets in Erbil and Sulaymaniyya on the morning of 21.11.22, killing at least one person and injuring an unknown number of people. The attacks appear to be aimed at positions and facilities of Iranian Kurdish opposition groups in Iraq. These are accused of providing military support for the uprising in Iran at present and exploiting the unrest for their own ends.

Jamaica

State of emergency declared due to increase in gang violence and homicides

Prime minister Andrew Holness declared a state of emergency in several areas of the country, including the capital, Kingston, on 15.11.22 due to increasing gang violence. The resultant special powers, enabling buildings to be searched more easily and arrests to be made without warrants, are intended to guarantee greater security. Such measures carried out in the course of frequently imposed states of emergency in the past have occasionally given rise to criticism, however. In this connection, in June 2022 the supreme court upheld a man's claim that his rights as enshrined in the constitution had been violated when he was arbitrarily arrested in 2018 and detained for several months without trial during a state of emergency.

According to police figures, the country, which has one of the highest homicide rates worldwide, recorded almost 7 % more homicides (1,360) between January and 13.11.22, the majority of which (over 70 %) are said to be attributable to gang violence. The illegal possession of firearms is a major problem in this connection, prompting the government to launch a campaign entitled "Get every illegal gun" at the beginning of the year. This campaign seeks to resolve the problem by various measures, including increased confiscations and a law reform (New Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act).

Kuwait

Death sentences executed

A total of seven people were executed at Kuwait's central prison on 16.11.22. They had all been sentenced to death for murder and comprised one Ethiopian woman, one Pakistani man, one Syrian man, one Kuwaiti woman and three Kuwaiti men. While people are regularly sentenced to death in Kuwait, execution of the death sentence is comparatively rare; it last took place in 2017 and prior to that in 2013.

Lebanon

Economic situation

On 16.11.22 prime minister Mikati presented a plan which is intended to enable the state power grid to supply electricity for 8 to 10 hours a day over a period of around four months. The remaining liquidity resulting from the activation of special drawing rights of the IMF, amounting to around US\$ 300 million, is to be used to fund the first two months. This is to be accompanied by a substantial increase in the price of electricity and markedly stricter bill collection. Only around 60 % of households are not currently in arrears. Households which do not pay their bills are to have their electricity supply cut off, without any exceptions. The capital obtained in this way is to enable the programme to run for a further two months. It remains unclear how this plan is to be applied in practice and what results it can actually achieve.

The country has still not been able to carry out the amendments to the law regulating banks, as required by the IMF.

The cholera epidemic is continuing to spread. Following the provision of some 600,000 vaccine doses by various donors, a vaccination campaign is being launched above all in the north of the country, under the auspices of Doctors Without Borders. The number of vaccinations carried out so far is in the thousands. The epidemic is affecting poor Lebanese and Syrian households in particular.

Morocco

Attack on trans woman – attackers arrested

It was reported in the media on 14.11.22 that four people, including three minors, had been arrested on suspicion of having physically attacked a trans woman in Tangier and subjecting her to homophobic insults. Openly queer people are often the victims of violence in public and do not receive any job opportunities. In addition, the LGBTIQ+ community does not enjoy any legal protection.

Nigeria

South-east: Traditional ruler killed at his home

Unknown attackers shot dead a traditional ruler and two of his adjutants in Imo State in south-eastern Nigeria on 14.11.22. According to reports in the media, the attack on the ruler Eze Ignitius Asor took place at his palace in the town of Oguta. During their getaway, the perpetrators also attacked the office of a local civil defence militia, killing at least one person and stealing three motorcycles. Traditional rulers remain influential and highly esteemed throughout large areas of Nigeria. As is commonly the case with regard to acts of violence in the south-east of Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.05.22 and 10.10.22), the authorities are blaming the incident on the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) independence movement, which has been banned since 2017. An attack by unknown individuals on a police checkpoint in Enugu State in south-eastern Nigeria on 19.11.22 in which three police officers died is also being attributed to separatist forces.

North-west: Military kills militia leader

According to reports in the media, soldiers killed high-ranking militia leader Kachalla Gudau and several of his followers in an exchange of fire with a violent group in Kaduna State in north-west Nigeria on 13.11.22. Gudau is believed to be responsible for numerous kidnappings, murders, cattle thefts and drug shipments. Observers of the security situation in the north-west are of the view that the security forces have recently been stepping up their operations against violent groups. The government has been describing and treating such groups as terrorists since the beginning of 2022 (cf. BN of 10.01.22). Some reports in the media also use the terms “bandits” and “militiamen”.

South-west: Police stepping up efforts to combat FGM

Government agencies in Ekiti State in south-west Nigeria have announced more resolute action against the forbidden practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). Reports in the media citing announcements by the Ekiti State Police Command on 03.11.22 indicate that perpetrators will be pursued more actively by the police in future. The corresponding official statement was made at an anti-FGM workshop held in the capital of Ekiti State, which was

attended by the Nigerian NGO Hacey Health Initiative as well as representatives of Nigerian security agencies and organisations and leading local figures. The statement emphasizes that Nigerian laws have long forbidden FGM under penalty of fines and custodial sentences. While scientific surveys have identified a decline in FGM in Ekiti State, the prevalence of FGM here remains above the national average. Local anti-FGM campaigns are no rarity in Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.11.20, 22.02.21 and 09.05.22).

Pakistan

Afghan refugees arrested in Sindh

An estimated 1,500 Afghan refugees, including women and children, have been arrested in Sindh province in recent weeks. The law in Pakistan on foreigners provides for fines and prison sentences in case of offences, as well as the return of foreigners without valid residence titles. The Pakistani authorities have announced corresponding measures for those who have not extended their residence titles by 31.12.22. The Afghan refugees living in the country fear mass arrests. Since the Taliban assumed power in Afghanistan, tens of thousands of Afghans have fled to Pakistan, where millions of Afghan refugees have been living for decades.

TTP attack on security forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Six members of the security forces were killed in an attack on a police vehicle near Shahab Khel in the Lakki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on 16.11.22. The attackers, fighters of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has claimed responsibility for the attack, escaped on motorcycles.

Three killed in explosion in South Waziristan

Two Taliban fighters and a soldier of the frontier corps died in an explosion at a market in South Waziristan on 18.11.22. At least two people were injured. The cause of the explosion remains unclear. It is presumed that either a suicide attack took place or a land mine exploded. No-one has claimed responsibility for the incident. Recent months have witnessed an increase in attacks by the TTP in South Waziristan.

Spin Boldak-Chaman border crossing reopened

The Spin Boldak-Chaman border crossing was reopened on 21.11.22, following a temporary closure (cf. BN of 15.11.22).

Palestinian territories / Israel

West Bank: Attacker kills two Israelis; violent clash between pilgrims and Palestinian population

On 15.11.22 a Palestinian attacker killed two Israelis with a knife and seriously injured three other people. The attack took place in the settlement of Ariel, between the cities of Nablus and Ramallah. The attacker subsequently attempted to escape in a stolen car. He caused an accident, however, and was killed by the Israeli military as he tried to leave the scene of the accident.

On 19.11.22 Israeli pilgrims attacked the Palestinian population in Hebron and threw objects at them. One pilgrim attacked an Israeli soldier, injuring her slightly. The military escorts Jewish pilgrims and is entrusted with ensuring their safety.

According to reports in the media, the Israeli military is continuing to carry out arrest raids almost every night at various locations in the West Bank.

Gaza Strip: Fire kills 21 people

21 people were killed in a house fire which broke out on 18.11.22. According to reports in the media, the fire spread as a result of large quantities of petrol stored in a residential building. It remains unclear how the fire started. None of the people who were in the three-storey building at the time of the fire survived. Numerous children were among the dead.

Against the backdrop of the continuing energy crisis in the Gaza Strip, families commonly store petrol and diesel to cover their needs in the winter.

According to reports in the media, Palestinian officials have criticised the fact that the civilian rescue services have been unable to develop sufficient capacities, particularly with regard to fire-fighting in multi-storey buildings, on account of the blockade of the Gaza Strip which has been ongoing for 15 years.

Republic of Moldova

Ongoing anti-government protests; international donor conference

According to police information, 16 people were arrested in the course of a demonstration in the centre of the capital, Chişinău, on 18.11.22. Anti-government protests have been ongoing in the Republic of Moldova since the beginning of September. Reports in the media claim that the protests are being organised by the pro-Russian opposition Shor party against the backdrop of the critical energy supply situation, among other issues (cf. BN of 24.10.22). On 15.11.22 the Moldovan authorities reported large-scale blackouts as a result of the war in neighbouring Ukraine, with hundreds of thousands of households apparently affected throughout the country. A further international donor conference is to be held on 21.11.22 to discuss financial support for the Republic of Moldova. According to reports in the media, the two donor conferences which have been held to date have generated a total of EUR 1.2 billion. The state of emergency in the Republic of Moldova is currently set to continue until 08.12.22. On 18.11.22 the de facto government of the separatist Transnistria region extended the “yellow” terror alert level until 19.01.23.

Sri Lanka

Call for release of two demonstrators

Amnesty International (ai) is calling for the release of two protest leaders who were arrested in the wake of the anti-government demonstrations which took place in the island state from the beginning of 2022. The two students have been in custody for more than 90 days, since August 2022, on the basis of the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

South Sudan

Continuing rainfall and flooding

According to information from a humanitarian relief organisation and reports in the media, the very heavy rainfall for the fourth year in succession and the resultant flooding has forced a million people to leave their homes. In addition, 37,000 tonnes of harvest have been destroyed and 800,000 cattle killed. In Unity State, 140,000 people have only be reachable by boat for a number of weeks now. The flooding as a whole has severely restricted access to important facilities such as health centres and schools and made the corresponding routes substantially longer or impassable. In some regions it can take up to two days to reach the nearest health facility, with boats as the only viable means of transport.

121 health facilities have reportedly been destroyed by the flooding to date. The health minister of Unity State announced on 17.11.22 that at least 51 cases of measles had been confirmed. In view of the fear that the measles could spread in a nearby camp for people displaced by the flooding, the evacuation of infected individuals is under consideration. Measles outbreaks occurred in the districts of Torit, Maban and Tambura back at the end of February 2022. The stagnant water and the deteriorating food supply and healthcare situation are giving rise to a heightened risk of other diseases, such as malaria and cholera, breaking out in some regions.

Upper Nile State: Renewed fighting

According to information in the media, violent clashes broke out once again in the Fashoda district on 17.11.22. Members of the Shilluk and Nuer ethnic groups were reportedly involved. No information has been reported on casualties. The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has appealed to the South Sudanese army and to leading figures in politics and society to intervene without delay, urging that the violence must be curbed before it spills over into other areas.

Fighting between rival ethnic groups in Upper Nile State back in August 2022 led to the displacement and killing of many civilians and the destruction of their property (cf. BN of 29.08.22).

Sudan

Further demonstrations

17.11.22 witnessed a continuation of the weekly demonstrations in various towns and cities, including in the capital, against the military takeover, accompanied by criticism of the Forces of Freedom and Change group (FFC) for engaging in talks with the military to find a compromise for a future transitional government. The demonstrators also remembered the demonstrations held last year on 17.11.21, when security forces deployed live ammunition against demonstrators in Khartoum and Omdurman, killing 16 people.

The demonstrators called once again for the military to be fully excluded from the government, rejecting any negotiations or compromises. Although the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights appealed to the Sudanese security forces to exercise restraint towards the demonstrators, media reports refer to a tough approach involving the large-scale use of tear gas, among other severe measures. According to information from the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors (CCSD), 58 people were injured. The CCSD has further stated that the injuries also resulted from the use of rubber bullets, flash grenades and a variety of thrown objects. One person was again injured by a government vehicle.

Syria

Turkish military offensive

Turkish combat aircraft carried out numerous strikes on 89 targets in northern Iraq and northern Syria on 20.11.22. According to the Turkish defence ministry, the attacks targeted bunkers, tunnels, ammunition dumps and training facilities of Kurdish groups from Tal Rifaat in north-western Syria to the Qandil Mountains in the east of northern Iraq. The ministry states that the operation was carried out in retaliation for the attack in Istanbul's city centre on 13.11.22 (cf. BN of 15.11.22). The military operation goes by the name of Claw Sword (Pençe-Kılıç Operasyonu). Both the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the military wing of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) have denied accusations that they were responsible for the attack in Istanbul.

A spokesperson of the Kurdish Syrian health authorities has claimed that a children's hospital which was under construction near to the city of Kobani (Ain al-Arab) was also hit in one of the Turkish air raids. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) has documented one civilian death, 14 deaths among SDF fighters and twelve among members of the Syrian Arab Army. The state news agency, SANA, reports "several" soldiers having been killed.

For its part, the SDF supreme command stated that the Turkish attack will not go unanswered. Shortly afterwards, seven Turkish police officers and one soldier were injured in a rocket attack on the Turkish-Syrian border crossing point at Oncupinar-Azaz.

Violent crime in Al-Hawl

The SDF has reported that the dead bodies of two decapitated Egyptian girls were recovered from a sewer under the Al-Hawl camp for suspected dependants of IS members on 15.11.22. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the girls, who were aged eleven and 13, had been reported missing several days previously. Both the SOHR and the local SDF authorities blamed the crime on IS. So-called sleeper cells apparently pursue people, especially females, who fail to submit to the extremist ideology of IS.

This represents the first murder to be documented in Al-Hawl since the security forces carried out extensive raids in the camp in the middle of September, in the course of which a number of people were arrested and arms and ammunition were seized.

Tunisia

Freedom of the press - prosecution on account of a critical article

According to various reports in the media, investigations have been initiated into a journalist on account of a critical article on prime minister Najila Bouden Romdhane's record in office to date. This makes Nizar Bahloul, editor-in-chief of the online website Business News, the first journalist to face prosecution under the law against false information, which was enacted in September 2022 (cf. BN of 26.09.22).

Türkiye

Arrests in connection with the attack in Istanbul

Justice minister Bekir Bozdag announced on 15.11.22 that in addition to the main suspect 49 other suspects had also been arrested in connection with the bomb attack in Istanbul. According to Bozdag, those arrested are individuals who were in contact with and/or had supported the main suspect (cf. BN of 15.11.22). The police claim that the main suspect has admitted having carried out the attack on the orders of the PKK and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). Spokespersons of the PKK and the YPG have since denied the accusations. No terrorist organisation has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

HRW report on push-backs of Afghan refugees

On 18.11.22 Human Rights Watch (HRW) published the report "No One Asked Me Why I Left Afghanistan" about the situation of Afghan refugees in Türkiye. The report claims that Türkiye has sent back tens of thousands of Afghan refugees at the national border with Iran or deported them directly to Afghanistan, without examining their entitlements to international protection. According to HRW, Afghan refugees in Türkiye have been actively prevented from registering for international protection or filing applications. The directorate of migration management at the interior ministry has announced that the entry of 238,448 "irregular" migrants had been prevented in 2022 so far as per 20.10.22. According to HRW, the majority of the migrants concerned are Afghan nationals. HRW interviewed 68 Afghans for the report, 38 of whom described a total of 114 push-back incidents between January 2021 and April 2022. All the interviewed men and boys, who were travelling without any female family members, had been beaten or otherwise abused by members of the Turkish security forces or had observed such mistreatment of other refugees. Many have reportedly also attested that members of the Turkish security forces fired shots in their direction when they were approaching the border or attempting to cross the border.

Ukraine

Renewed attacks on energy infrastructure throughout the country

Large-scale damage to the country's energy infrastructure was reported on 15.11.22 in the wake of Russian rocket attacks on numerous targets in Ukraine. According to information from the Ukrainian authorities, 17 regions were attacked with around 100 rockets, as a result of which some ten million households were affected by blackouts as at 17.11.22. The energy supply situation is reportedly particularly strained in the regions of Odessa, Kiev, Vinnytsia and Sumy. Numerous reports in the media speak of one of the heaviest rocket attacks since the beginning of the Russian invasion in February 2022. The Ukrainian authorities have stated that a Russian rocket attack on the town of Vilniansk, near to the city of Zaporizhzhia, resulted in a civilian death toll of at least nine, as per 19.11.22. On 20.11.22 the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported on explosions which had taken place on the site of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is occupied by Russian forces. The IAEA called on the warring parties to de-escalate the situation immediately. President Zelenskyy has stated that heavy fighting continues on the front line in the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk. Controlled power cuts were carried out on the evening of 20.11.22 in 15 Ukrainian regions and in the capital, Kiev, on account of the critical energy supply situation. In a statement released on 20.11.22, the Ukrainian defence ministry rejected the possibility of a ceasefire in view of the approaching winter. According to reports in the media, residents of the recently recaptured parts of the Mykolaiv and Kherson regions have been offered the option of voluntary evacuation. Accommodation is available for this

purpose in the city of Kryvyi Rih in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast or in western regions of Ukraine, according to information from the Ukrainian government.

Vietnam

Eight-year prison term for critical Facebook posts

On 18.11.22 a court sentenced the blogger Bui Van Thuan to eight years in prison for anti-state activities pursuant to Article 117(1) of the Criminal Code. Bui Van Thuan was arrested in August 2021 for voicing criticism of the Vietnamese government in Facebook posts. Stricter regulations have applied for social media platforms since 04.11.22, requiring “false” content to be removed within 24 hours, rather than the previous deadline of 48 hours after publication.

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