

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1118
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
Titel:	Information Centre Asylum and Migration Briefing Notes
Udgivet:	16. september 2019
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	21. januar 2020

Group 62 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

16 September 2019

Afghanistan

Voluntary returnees

According to the UN 5,023 registered refugees have returned to Afghanistan between 01 January 2019 and 31 August 2019. Of these 3,589 came from Pakistan, 1,368 from Iran and 66 from other countries. 1,135 of them returned to Kabul, thus the favourite destination, next was Nangarhar with 620 returnees. Year over year the number of voluntary registered returnees fell by 57 %.

Attacks

In a bomb attack on a barracks of the Afghan Special Forces in Kabul four soldiers were killed and three were injured on 12 September 2019.

On 11 September 2019 the premises of the US embassy and the building complex of the Afghan Defence Ministry in Kabul were shelled. There are no reports of any injuries or deaths.

It is said that the Taliban conquered two more districts of Takhar province in north-eastern Afghanistan after two days of fighting.

Red Cross resumes work in Afghanistan

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will resume its work in Afghanistan after an agreement on security guarantees was struck with the Taliban. Because of several allegations raised in April the Taliban had announced that they will no longer protect ICRC staff, as a consequence the ICRC stopped its work (see BN of 15 April 2019).

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) ten staff members of medical services have been killed in Afghanistan, three hospitals were destroyed and twelve more severely damaged, only in the first three months of this year. Last year had seen more than 90 attacks on medical installations that killed a total of 44 medical workers.

Algeria

Election date set

On 15 September 2019 interim president Bensalah announced on TV that the presidential elections will take place on 12 December 2019. Since 22 February 2019 people in Algeria have been demonstrating against the old government weekly after Friday prayers, mostly peacefully. Long-time President Bouteflika had resigned in April and announced that he would not stand for election again. The election date that was first set for 04 July 2019 proved infeasible for lack of suitable candidates.

Cameroon

Anglophone crisis: President Biya announces inclusive national dialogue

In the evening of 10 September 2019 President Paul Biya addressed the population on TV and announced the calling of an "inclusive national dialogue" for the end of September. The dialogue shall deal with the situa-

tion in the two English-speaking regions Northwest and Southwest where anglophone separatists and government security forces have been clashing violently for almost three years. Prime Minister Dr Joseph Dion Ngute is to chair the talks which shall unite politicians, intellectuals, traditional and religious leaders as well as representatives of the security forces, armed groups and victims of the conflict. Biya, however, also ruled out any separation of the anglophone regions from Cameroon in his speech. He also repeated his previous offer of an amnesty for those separatists that put down their arms voluntarily.

China

Hong Kong: Protests

Protests in the special administrative region also continued on the 15th consecutive weekend. On 15 September 2019 tens of thousands joined a demonstration which the police had banned for security reasons. It was followed by clashes with the police. Protesters hurled stones and incendiary devices at the police in front of the seat of Hong Kong's government. Road blocks were set up and metro installations were damaged. The police used tear gas and water cannons.

On 14 September 2019 several people were wounded in confrontations between followers of the protest movement and followers of the Chinese government. The police arrested several people.

Eritrea

Freedom of the press ranking: Eritrea comes in last

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reports that Eritrea is the country exercising the strictest censorship. The organisation points out that all media are state controlled, there is no right to freedom of opinion and at least 16 journalists are detained in inhuman conditions.

The index concentrates on the conditions for media and journalists within a country and does not include an assessment of the population's access to foreign media. One can receive foreign TV stations such as CNN, BBC or Al-Jazeera via satellite in Eritrea, generally opposition websites are also accessible on the internet.

Eritrean national team players to deposit security bond before playing abroad

There are reports from the Eritrean diaspora that Eritrean authorities required each national team member to deposit a security bond of €6,300 before they left the country on 10 September 2019 to play the qualification game for the football world cup in Namibia. Obviously this is meant to prevent athletes from applying for asylum in the countries they travel to. After a qualification game for the football world cup in Botswana in October 2015 ten of the players had not returned. At the London Olympics in 2012 about one third of the athletes stayed in England.

Ethiopia

IS fighters arrested

The Ethiopian military announced the arrest of several Islamic State members. They are accused of having planned to set up a base in Ethiopia and to recruit, train and arm Ethiopians. The group had published a three-minute video that included IS songs in Amharic. The search is ongoing for other members of this extremist group. No further details were given. Only a few days ago Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed had warned that also al-Shabaab is planning activities in Ethiopia.

Arrests after grenade attack in Oromia

One day after a grenade attack on a police station in Buayu in the regional state of Oromia on 12 September 2019, 22 suspects have been arrested for their alleged involvement. Nine policemen were injured in the attack. The suspects were also charged with having ties to the Oromo Liberation Front rebel group.

The OLF claims to fight for the rights of the Oromo ethnicity - Ethiopia's largest ethnic group at 35 percent. Prime Minister Abiy offered reconciliation to the OLF in June 2018 and a peace agreement was made, subsequently the OLF was deleted from the list of terrorist organizations. About 1,500 OLF fighters returned

from exile. The OLF's legalisation was, however, subject to the surrender of arms by its members, but not all of them have complied yet. Acts of violence are regularly reported.

India

Kashmir: Hundreds of protests since the revocation of autonomy rights

In the northernmost Indian federal state of Jammu and Kashmir hundreds of protests were staged after the state's autonomy rights were revoked and the deployment of Indian soldiers was increased. Most of the protests took place in the capital Srinagar and in Bramulla district to the west of the capital as well as in Pulwama. During the protests 200 civilians and more than 400 members of the security forces were injured. Meanwhile more than 4,000 people were arrested, 3,000 released and at least one person died (see BN of 09 September 2019).

India/Pakistan

Punjab: Will travel become easier for Sikh pilgrims soon?

While the Kashmir conflict continues to smoulder, Pakistan and India are about to sign an agreement enabling Indian Sikh pilgrims to travel without a visa to one of their most sacred shrines in the Pakistani city of Kartarpur Sahib on the border to the Indian state of Punjab. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, spent the last years of his life there. It is estimated that this monotheistic faith, that dates back to the 15th century, has about 27 million followers around the world. Most of them living in India, mainly in Punjab. The Harmandir Sahib (Hari Mandir) temple, also referred to as the Golden Temple, the Sikhs' most sacred place of prayer (Gurdwara) is located in Amritsar in Punjab.

Iran

President Rohani advocates to forcefully fight IS terrorists in Idlib

During the summit of three with Russia and Turkey the Iranian president intends to advocate fighting the remaining IS terrorists in the Syrian rebel stronghold Idlib with vehemence. Before departing to Ankara on 15 September 2019 he said that the terrorists are still present in Idlib and therefore the fight against them must continue there. In the last two and a half years Russia, Turkey and Iran had seen to it that most of the Syrian territory was liberated from IS terrorists and came back under the control of the central government. Only Idlib and the eastern part of the Euphrates river remain insecure.

Iraq

Security situation

Security relevant incidents continue in Iraq. Diyala, Salah ad-Din, Kirkuk and Ninive provinces were most affected. A civilian was killed by an IED explosion south of Mosul on 09 September 2019, six others were injured. In another IED explosion on 10 September 2019 a civilian died south of Kirkuk and near Muqdadiya in Diyala province three civilians were wounded by a mortar grenade.

A member of the security forces was killed and three were injured by two bomb attacks on Iraqi security patrols in Nida region, east of Babquba in Diyala province on 11 September 2019. Also on 11 September 2019 an Iraqi soldier died at an Iraqi security checkpoint in the area of Dawaleeb, north-east of Baquba in Diyala province. IS fighters attacked Iraqi security forces on 13 September 2019 in an area between Diyala and Salah ad-Din provinces, they killed one soldier and wounded two. Iraq informed that IS fighters stepped up their attacks on Iraqi security forces and civilians in this area.

Security operations against IS

On 09 September 2019 three IS hideouts in Mtaibijah on the border between Diyala and Salah ad-Din provinces were bombed during security operations of the Iraqi security forces (ISF) with the support of the international coalition. 15 IS fighters were killed and nine arrested. Also on 09 September 2019 the US-led

coalition with Peshmerga support killed ten IS fighters south-west of Erbil in the Mount Qara-Chokh area in Makhmour district.

On 10 September 2019 the US air force bombed IS bases on Qanus island in the Tigris river. Video footage suggests that the IS bases and their personnel on the island suffered massive damage.

On 11 September 2019 Iraqi security forces killed three IS leaders by shelling an area between Diyala and Salah ad-Din provinces.

During security operations in Anbar province 570 explosive belts and other bombs, grenades and mines were discovered in an IS hideout on 12 September 2019.

Mass panic during Ashura festivities

It is reported that at least 331 people were killed, 100 people were injured, ten of them seriously, when a mass panic broke out during the Hia Ashura festivities in the city of Karbala on 10 September 2019. Iraqi sources said that the stampede was caused by the large mass of faithful crowding at the entrance to the mosque housing Hussein's tomb.

Returning IS women with children

According to dpa news report 0185 of 14 September 2019, 05:30am, the security authorities expect the return of more Islamist women and their children from the war areas in Syria and Iraq to the German state of Hesse. A total of 150 men and women had left Hesse to fight on the side of the Islamic State terror militia (IS) and other terrorist groups or to support them, the report said.

Ivory Coast

Government reshuffle in preparation of 2020 presidential elections

President Alassane Ouattara reorganised his government on 04 September 2019, 13 months ahead of the next presidential elections. Five new ministers were added as well as two new state secretaries. The executive therefore now consists of 41 ministers and seven state secretaries, nine of them women. He also appointed influential persons close to him to strategically important posts, such as the minister for security and civil protection or the minister for economic and financial affairs. The reorganisation is to strengthen the president's party RHDP (Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes Pour la Démocratie et la Paix) that was established in January 2019 and still is in its consolidation phase, for the presidential campaign in October 2020.

Historic meeting of opposition groups

The opposition is preparing for the presidential elections as well. Former presidents and party opponents, Laurent Gbagbo (Front Populaire Ivoirien, FPI) and Henri Konan Bédié (Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire, PDCI) appeared on stage at the Stade du Palais des Sports de Treichville in Abidjan on 14 September 2019 in front of an audience of about 10,000. The motto of this first meeting was "national reconciliation". They want to bring final and lasting peace to Ivory Coast and also mentioned an amnesty for the political prisoners from the years of conflict in 2010/11.

Libya

Massacre in Tarhouna?

There are as yet unconfirmed reports from the LNA-controlled city of Tarhouna of a massacre of Haftar opponents. The local Al-Kani militia (also known as the 9th brigade) mostly controls the city and is currently siding with Haftar's LNA. It seems that the militia killed dozens of people in the night of 13 to 14 September 2019 who were celebrating the death on 13 September 2019 of the former militia-leaders Abdul Wahhab al-Maqri, Mohsen al-Kani and his brother Abdul Azim al-Kani (the al-Kani brothers are considered major figures in the militia which is often referred to by their name. Two other brothers are still alive). Lists and reports are making the rounds on the internet saying that at least one entire family is among the victims. The GNA as well as the rival militia Tarhouna Protection Force, which is siding with the GNA, condemned the murders, in view of the circumstances it is impossible, though, to determine any further details.

Montenegro

EU enlargement: Freedom of the press

EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn urged the Balkan states to ensure freedom of the media and the press at a media conference on 12 September 2019. He said that these countries could not progress any further on their way into the EU, unless the freedom of the media was guaranteed. In the same setting cultural affairs minister Aleksandar Bogdanović said that his government will strive to achieve safe and unhindered working conditions for journalists. Attacking or assassinating journalists was totally unacceptable, however, the freedom of opinion was tied to the responsibility to report objectively and only based on facts, he said and explained that the government initiated a reform of the media laws in 2018 to strengthen the self-control of media and public radio.

In recent years there have been repeated attacks on journalists in Montenegro most of which could not be resolved.

Myanmar

Rebel alliance proclaims ceasefire

Three of the members of the Northern Alliance, the Arakan Army (AA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), proclaimed a unilateral truce until 08 October 2019 on 09 September 2019. The rebels and the military have been engaged in fighting in the northern Shan State since mid-August 2019 (see BN of 09 September 2019). Already in December 2018 the military had declared a unilateral ceasefire including in Shan State which runs until 21 September 2019 after having been extended several times. The fourth member of the Northern Alliance, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), had not participated in the recent fighting.

On 10 September 2019 the government invited the four members of the Northern Alliance to participate in talks on signing a bilateral ceasefire agreement in the city of Kyaingtong in Shan State on 17 September 2019.

Rakhine: Villages destroyed for government buildings

On 10 September 2019 the BBC reported that Myanmar's military built police barracks, refugee camps, and government facilities on the land of some former Rohingya villages in Rakhine State. In 2017 the Rohingya fled to neighbouring Bangladesh to escape the military's attacks. The report is based on findings made during a tour to the locations led by the Myanmar government and on the evaluation of satellite images. The International Cyber Policy Centre said that at least 40% of the villages which suffered from destruction during the violence in 2017, have been completely flattened meanwhile.

Military operations in retaliation for attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in August 2017 caused the flight of about 700,000 members of the Muslim Rohingya minority to Bangladesh.

Nigeria

ISWAP attacks

On 12 September 2019 fighters of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) attacked the three cities Gubio, Gajiganna and Gajiram in Borno State. In Gubio the Islamists killed six soldiers and the leader of the local Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). In the two other cities they burnt down buildings and caused the soldiers stationed there to flee.

After fighting soldiers at Gudumbali (capital of the Guzamala Local Government Area, Borno State) ISWAP succeeded in taking control of the local military base. Reportedly at least nine soldiers died in the fighting, twenty are still missing.

Casualties during Ashura procession of the Shiite IMN sect

In all capitals of the northern states as well as in Abuja, processions of the Shiite Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) took place to celebrate the religious Ashura festivities on 10 September 2019. According to the IMN spokesperson, Ibrahim Musa, at least 15 IMN members were killed by the police in several cities and more were injured. The police announced the arrest of several participants in the processions which were

apparently held without any incidents in some other cities. The police had previously warned that any assembly or procession by IMN members was illegal and would be treated as an action in support of terrorism. Nigeria had outlawed the IMN as a terrorist organisation at the end of July 2019.

Russian Federation

Nationwide house searches of Navalny supporters

According to media reports over 150 houses and offices of supporters and staff members of opposition politician Alexey Navalny in about 40 cities nationwide were searched on 12 September 2019. The descriptions of some of those affected and the footage of surveillance cameras indicate that the forces, some of which were hooded, also used violence. Communication equipment was seized. The Russian authorities did not comment on the searches. But investigations for suspected money laundering have been ongoing against Navalny's anti-corruption foundation since August 2019.

According to Navalny supporters the searches are related to the opposition politician's attempts to influence the regional elections on 08 September 2019. Although neither Navalny nor his fellow-campaigners had been admitted to the regional elections on 08 September 2019, he had called upon Russians to strengthen the opposition when casting their votes.

Saudi Arabia/Yemen

Drone attack on oil field

One of Saudi Arabia's largest oil processing plants and a large oil field have been hit by drone attacks. The Yemeni Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for the attacks of 14 September 2019. A military Houthi spokesperson said in a statement transmitted by the rebel broadcasting station that the Houthi had used ten drones for the attack. The US, however, accused Iran of being behind the attack which is denied by the Tehran government. In recent months the Houthi rebels repeatedly attacked Saudi Arabian targets with drones. The state news agency SPA reported that the Saudi interior ministry informed that the drone attack had started a fire in the Abqaiq plant. Abqaiq is described as the world's largest installation for the stabilization of crude oil by its operator Saudi Aramco. It is estimated that the facility can process up to seven million barrels of crude oil per day. It is located about 330 km north-east of the capital Riyadh. Experts assume that over one million barrels of crude oil are produced daily at the Khurais oil field.

Serbia

Opposition party announces election boycott

The United Democratic Party, Serbia's major opposition party, announced that it will boycott the parliamentary elections scheduled for spring 2020. A party spokesperson said on 14 September 2019 that this decision will protect the future of the country and its citizens. It did not mean, however, that the party abandoned its demands for democratic change and free and fair elections. The party intended to cooperate with the European Parliament, the EU Commission and other international organisations in its fight for fair elections, he said.

The United Democratic Party is a leading member of the alliance of opposition parties Alliance for Serbia (SZS). The alliance embraces the spin-offs of the former party of the assassinated politician Zoran Đinđić.

For months tensions have been running high between the government and the opposition in Serbia. Since December 2018 weekly protests were held by opponents of the government and of President Aleksandar Vučić. On 14 September 2019 it was the 41th time already that the government critics took to the streets. However, their numbers have fallen considerably in recent weeks.

Somalia

Drought in Somalia

The UN is calling for international humanitarian aid for Somalia, because the people are suffering from the most severe drought since 2011. Six million people cannot find enough food and two million of them are threatened by starvation. The harvest from April to June is said to have been the worst since 2011. Due to decades of conflicts and a lack of investments Somalia has no infrastructure to counter the droughts that are occurring with increasing frequency. And once the rain comes, it often causes floods and displaces more people.

Fighting

Several armed confrontations between the government, AMISOM troops and al-Shabaab were reported last week, including near the city of Mahaday (Middle Shabelle region) on 08 September 2019; on 10 September 2019 in Garbaharey (Gedo region); on 12 September 2019 in Marka (Lower Shabelle region) and in Qoryoley, Awdhegale, Bariire and on the outskirts of Afgoye (Lower Shabelle region). Reportedly both militants and soldiers died in the fighting.

Attacks

Alleged al-Shabaab fighters detonated a car bomb on 09 September 2019 that injured a policeman in Mogadishu.

On 11 September 2019 al-Shabaab fighters fired mortars on the presidential residence, the Villa Somalia, and the Ethiopian embassy in Mogadishu. A civilian was killed and others were wounded.

At least five people, including two children, were killed and several wounded when a landmine detonated near a police station in Dinsor, Bay region, on 11 September 2019.

On 14 September 2019 three people, including a government official, died in the explosion of a landmine on the road between the cities of Balad and Jowhar in Middle Shabelle region.

South Sudan

Agreement of date to form unity government

On 11 September 2019 the former warring parties agreed to form a government of unity by 12 November 2019. This is the result of talks between President Salva Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar who met in the capital Juba. The talks shall deal with the unresolved points of the peace agreement, including the number of states South Sudan should consist of in the future. Some central items in the peace agreement have not yet been implemented, such as the integration of the former rebels into the army.

Syria

Idlib: Ceasefire still shaky

Pro-opposition media reported that since 09 September 2019 individual air strikes have been flown and artillery was fired several times, although a ceasefire is in force. Especially Kafr Sejnah and Hazareen in the south of the province are said to have been hit by artillery fire. Allegedly Syrian government planes dropped bombs on Maarat al-Numan on 12 September 2019.

On 11 September 2019 Syrian opposition media reported that Russian special forces, militias supported by Iran and elite units of the Syrian army were amassing along the front line.

On 16 September 2019 the warring parties Turkey, Russia and Iran discussed the situation in Idlib in Ankara.

Amnesty and reduced prison sentences

Syrian president Bashar al-Assad issued a decree on 15 September 2019 providing for an amnesty and reduced prison sentences for offences committed prior to 14 September 2019. Capital punishment shall be commuted to life imprisonment, life imprisonment with hard labour to 20-year prison sentences with hard labour and life imprisonment to 20 years in prison. Convicts suffering from terminal diseases shall be

released. Deserters' punishment will be forgiven, if they turn themselves in within three months or six months when staying abroad.

Several decrees of this kind have been issued during the years of conflict, most recently in 2018.

Air strikes on the Iraqi border

On 09 September 2019 opposition-related media reported an air strike against Shiite militias in Boukamal near the Iraqi border. At least 18 fighters are said to have died in the night raid. A security spokesperson for the Syrian government, however, said that there had been no casualties and that this attack had merely been staged by Israeli fighter jets. A militia leader from Iraq also assigned responsibility for the attack to Israel and stressed that no Iraqis had been killed. The Lebanese Hezbollah reported that the Israelis had destroyed a training camp under construction. Israel did not comment on the incident.

Attacks in al-Rai and Afrin

On 15 September 2019 Turkish state media reported an attack in the Syrian-Turkish border town of al-Rai. A car bomb exploded in front of a hospital and left twelve people dead.

Syrian opposition members had reported a car bomb explosion in Afrin on 13 September 2019. The bomb detonated near the offices of a rebel fraction that is supported by the Turkish military. There are no reports about deaths, 25 people were injured.

Since Turkey occupied Afrin, which was previously controlled by Kurdish militias, in January 2018 there have been repeated attacks against the occupational forces.

Tunisia

Presidential elections in Tunisia

On 15 September 2019 about seven million Tunisians were called upon to elect a new president. 26 candidates competed for the succession of head of state Beji Caid Essebsi who deceased in July 2019. As there was no clear favourite, a run-off election seems probable. According to current forecasts the independent candidate and law professor Kais Saied and the media entrepreneur Nabil Karoui won most of the votes. Saied intentionally distanced himself from all political parties during his campaign, the media entrepreneur Karoui was arrested three weeks ago and is currently in pre-trial detention. The Tunisian prosecution is charging him with money laundering and tax evasion. About 100,000 members of the security forces, the police and the military provided security during the elections, there are no news about any unrest during the elections.

Turkey

Five journalists released from prison

Turkey's Supreme Court of Appeals acquitted five former journalists of the critical paper "Cumhuriyet" on 12 September 2019. They were released after 142 days of detention, but are not allowed to leave the country. Other "Cumhuriyet" employees remain in detention, however, in some cases their sentences have been mitigated.

In April 2018 14 former employees of "Cumhuriyet" had been sentenced on charges of alleged support of terrorism, some of them to several years of imprisonment. Articles from the paper had served as the main source of evidence.

Casualties in bomb explosion

Media reported that seven people were killed and at least 13 wounded when their vehicle was blown up by a booby trap on the road in south-eastern Turkey on 12 September 2019. Their van was travelling in Kulp district between the provinces of Diyarbakir and Mus.

The Turkish government blames the PKK for the attack.

Resignations from the AKP

Former Turkish prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu and seven other politicians left President Erdogan's governing party AKP last week. At the same time Davutoglu announced that he will establish a new party, saying that it was both a historic responsibility as well as a necessity to build a new political movement. The

AKP has become removed from its fundamental principles and even well-meant criticism was meanwhile considered treason and hostility, he said

Ukraine

First gay pride parade in Ukraine's second largest city

On 15 September 2019 about 2,000 people demonstrated for more equality for LGBTI people in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. The first gay pride parade in Ukraine's second largest city remained peaceful, the protesters waived rainbow flags and chanted slogans for more acceptance and protection of LGBTI people in Kharkiv. On the fringes of the march rightist counter-demonstrators shortly clashed with the police, though, two policemen were injured and 17 people were arrested.

Venezuela

Further investigations against Guaidó

Another charge has been added to the investigations that are already pending against the parliament-supported President Guaidó. On 14 September 2019 new investigations were made public, because a photograph had surfaced that allegedly shows Guaidó with two members of the Los Rastrojos drug cartel. Guaidó denied that this was a genuine photo saying it was forged.

Yemen

Al-Qaeda takes control of a district

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is said to have taken control of al-Wadea district in Abyan Gouvernement on 08 September 2019. AQAP is present in several areas of Abyan.

Explosion in Hodeida

On 09 September 2019 several people were killed or injured by the explosion of a building that served as arms storage for the Houthi rebels in the Zafran district of Hodeida.

Explosion in Lahij

Reports say that two children were killed and three others injured by a bomb explosion in Lahij Gouvernement.

Fighting

There are reports about fighting between unidentified militants and government-loyal forces from Abyan Gouvernement (on 10 September 2019), several districts of Aden (on 12 September 2019) and Hadramawt Gouvernement (on 12 September 2019 and 13 September 2019).