

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

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# Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

09 September 2024

## Afghanistan

### Security situation

According to its own information, the National Resistance Front (NRF) killed five Taliban in the provinces of Herat, Kabul and Takhar between 02.09. and 8.09.24.

The media report that the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) carried out a bomb attack on the "Directorate for Monitoring Compliance with the Emir's Decrees" (former Attorney General's Office) in Kabul in police district 6 (Qala-e Bakhtiar). The ISKP claimed 45 dead or injured persons; the Taliban reported six dead and 13 injured. The figures cited by the directorate were 34 dead and 22 injured, including 16 prosecutors who had remained in office after the Taliban take-over, this is according to the Association of Afghan Prosecutors. The ISKP justified the act by claiming that they had taken revenge for the Taliban's transfer of imprisoned ISKP members to the prison in Bagram. The directorate also oversees the prisons and prisoner transports in the country.

On 07.09.24 Taliban and Pakistani border guards clashed in Khost province. One Talib was reportedly killed, six Taliban and five civilians were injured.<sup>1</sup>

### Persecution

In Badghis province, the Taliban arrested a member of the local wrestling association, a report from 02.09.24 says. They accused him of not interrupting competitions at prayer time.

In five provinces, the Taliban allegedly flogged a total of 17 people on 02.09. and 07.09.24. Some of them were accused of "running away from home" and sentenced to several years in prison.

In Takhar province, the Taliban reportedly shot dead a former soldier on 04.09.24 while searching for supporters of the NRF in the region. In Kabul, the Taliban are said to have arrested a former government employee and his brother on the same day. The background is unclear. In Badghis province, the Taliban reportedly arrested a person on 05.09.24 on charges of being a member of the NRF.

In Kandahar province, the Taliban interrupted the transmission of a television station on 04.09.24, accusing it of showing living creatures which the "virtue law" prohibits. In Daikundi province, the Taliban reportedly banned women from working for media companies on 06.09.24.

In Panjshir province, clashes erupted between the Taliban and the local population after a Taliban vehicle collided with a civilian vehicle. The Taliban are said to have arrested at least eleven people on 07.09.24.<sup>2</sup>

### Humanitarian situation and migration

According to the IOM, the number of people leaving Afghanistan for Iran and Pakistan is increasing. The figure for the period from 18.08. to 24.08.24 is said to have been 72,000 – a 21 % percent rise against the week before. Many of them cite economic reasons. In the same period, IOM counted 64,950 people travelling to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran.

In Badakhshan province, 26 children died of malnutrition within six months.

According to a report from 05.09.24, the Taliban have forced several organisations supporting people with disabilities to stop their work. The reasons for this are unclear.<sup>3</sup>

## **Algeria**

### **Presidential election: Tebboune re-elected**

According to the national electoral authority, incumbent president Tebboune was re-elected in the presidential election on 07.09.24 with just under 95 % support.

According to preliminary results, voter turnout was 48 %. The disproportionately low number of young voters going to the polls was especially striking. The election campaign was overshadowed by a repressive atmosphere in which opposition members, media professionals and civil society groups were subjected to harassment and bullying, as reported by activists and international organisations.<sup>4</sup>

## **Azerbaijan**

### **Parliamentary election: No surprises**

President Ilham Aliyev's New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) won the early parliamentary elections on 01.09.24 (cf. BN of 19.08.24) and received 68 of the 125 seats, one seat less than in the last election. 45 seats went to independent candidates, with the remaining seats going to small, predominantly Aliyev-loyal parties. Voter turnout was just over 37 %. The opposition party Müsavat, which did not win a mandate, declared that it did not recognise the legitimacy of the new parliament. Other opposition groups boycotted the election.

According to a press release issued by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on 02.09.24, the election was efficiently prepared, but showed a declining respect for fundamental freedoms (cf. BN of 22.01. and 19.08.24). Voters had had no real political alternatives. Overall, the election failed to meet democratic standards. People associated with the ruling party dominated the local election commissions. The access of local election observers had been restricted. In addition, various irregularities were found, for example in the counting of votes and in the registration of female and male candidates. Among these, the proportion of women had risen from 21 % to 30 % since the last election. Overall, however, women remain underrepresented both in electoral offices and in appointed positions; no efforts are made to increase their political participation, the ODIHR said.

According to official figures, Aliyev himself won the early presidential election of 07.02.24 (cf. BN of 18.12.23), with over 92 % of the vote. According to media reports, irregularities had been observed also in this election that took place in a non-competitive environment.<sup>5</sup>

## **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

### **129 dead in attempted Makala prison break**

In the night of 01.09. to 02.09.24 inmates of the country's largest prison, Makala Central Prison in the capital Kinshasa, attempted a prison break. According to the Congolese authorities, a total of 129 people died in the attack. 24 people were killed by shots fired after warnings, the majority of the deaths were due to the jostling crowds and the stampede. More than 50 other people were injured and several women were raped during the mayhem. During the attempted escape, fires broke out in several buildings of the prison complex. The government made it clear that none of the detainees had managed to escape. The opposition questions the government's account and fears a significantly higher number of victims.

According to local media correspondents, the army has cordoned off the surrounding area and reinforced its troops around the prison. On 03.09.24, electricity and food supplies were restored to the prison.

The Ministry of the Interior has convened a commission of enquiry. Voices from civil society, the political opposition and human rights organisations have criticised the security forces' crackdown and the large number of fatalities. They are calling for a joint and independent investigation into the events. Among other things, these voices suspect that the Makala prison's chronic overcrowding caused many of the deaths. Human rights organisations recently reported up to 15,000 detainees in the prison complex, which is designed for just 1,500 prisoners. The prison conditions are correspondingly problematic. The majority of detainees are still awaiting trial.<sup>6</sup>

### **Opposition politician arrested**

Agents of the Congolese National Intelligence Agency (Agence nationale de renseignement, ANR) arrested opposition politician Seth Kikuni on 02.09.24. According to one of Kikuni's political advisors, violence was used in the process. Two of his associates, who were also arrested, were released on 04.09.24. As far as is known right now, Kikuni is still in the custody of the ANR. The authorities have not yet commented on the reasons for the arrest. Kikuni's political companions suspect that he was arrested for his opposition views and activism against the government. A few hours before his office was stormed, Kikuni is said to have published a post about the attempted escape from Makala prison, questioning the government's account and describing the event as a massacre and execution of citizens.

In June 2023, Seth Kikuni and his partner Lubaya launched a movement against Felix Tshisekedi's government, arguing that the government was illegitimate, corrupt and had no real plans for the country. Kikuni was a presidential candidate in 2018 but withdrew his candidacy in favour of Moïse Katumbi in the December 2023 presidential elections.<sup>7</sup>

## **El Salvador**

### **IACHR calls for an end to the state of emergency**

On 04.09.24, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) published a report on the human rights situation under the state of emergency regulations in force since 2022. During the introduction of the state of emergency and the associated suspension of several constitutional rights in response to an increase in gang violence, more than 80,000 suspected gang members have been arrested so far. The regulations do not comply with inter-American legal norms, as the state of emergency systematically leads to arbitrary arrests and illegal raids. The prisons are overcrowded and there are reports of torture, sexual violence and deaths, which may constitute a violation of human rights. The IACHR views the decrease in gang violence related homicides during the state of emergency positively but considers that the restrictions on constitutional rights are no longer justified. The Commission therefore calls for an end to the state of emergency regulations and is in favour of a holistic security policy and a strategy of reparation.

The government under President Nayib Bukele rejects the accusations of alleged human rights violations.<sup>8</sup>

## **Ethiopia**

### **Opposition members released from prison**

According to official information, seven members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were released on 03.09.24 after spending more than four years in prison. Reportedly, they were released on bail. The OLF declared that the imprisonment of its members was "unjust" and for political reasons. Human rights organisations had repeatedly called for the release of the opposition members in the past.<sup>9</sup>

## **Guinea**

### **Third anniversary of the military coup: disappointment and protests**

A media report commemorating the third anniversary of the military coup on 05.09.21 and the takeover of power by the junta under Mamadi Doumbouya, which calls itself the Comité National de Rassemblement pour le Développement (CNRD), reflects voices from local and regional news portals. A recurrent statement is that the widespread initial enthusiasm about the dismissal of then President Alpha Condé had given way to general disappointment. Hopes for better governance, among other things, had not come true and practices of the previous government such as embezzlement, arbitrary arrests and other human rights violations were once again taking place. The holding of the trial for the stadium massacre of 28.09.2009 (cf. BN of 05.08.24) was seen as a positive development, which the civilian government under Condé had failed to achieve in over ten years.

As in the previous year (cf. BN of 11.09.23), the "Forces vives", a coalition of opposition groups and civil society groups, called for demonstrations on 05.09.24. These protests were planned to take place in small groups throughout the day and in the Conakry conurbation; they were meant to demand a return to constitutional order,

including holding democratic elections before 31.12.24 and the release of Oumar Sylla ("Foniké Menguè") and Mamadou Billo Bah (cf. BN of 15.07. and 22.07.24), whose whereabouts are still unknown.

On 02.09.24, a decision by the transitional government under the junta to suspend the licences of NGOs and associations for four months was reported. The decision was justified on the grounds of "actions to disrupt public order" by such initiatives. It is unclear whether this only applies to new licences or also to existing ones.<sup>10</sup>

## **Haiti**

### **Extension of the state of emergency to the entire country**

On 04.09.24, a spokesperson for Prime Minister Garry Conille announced that the state of emergency in place since 03.03.24 had been extended to all of the country's ten departments. The state of emergency, which had already been imposed by the previous government due to escalating gang crime and the collapse of state institutions in the densely populated Ouest region, where the capital Port-au-Prince is located, had already been extended and expanded to other parts of the country several times in the past. The move came one day before the visit of US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken. The US is the largest donor to the UN-backed Multinational Security Support Mission (MSS) led by Kenya (cf. BN of 2.03., 08.04. and 03.06.24), which shall support the Haitian police in restoring basic security and securing important infrastructure. An initial contingent of 400 Kenyan security forces arrived in June and July 2024. However, several news agencies report salary problems as well as shortages of equipment and personnel restricting their ability to combat heavily armed gangs. In addition, the deployment of at least 2,500 support personnel for the mission, which has been pledged by a further ten countries, is still pending. At a press conference in Port-au-Prince, Blinken spoke out in favour of extending the UN mandate, which expires in October 2024, and for more financial resources and personnel. He also announced a further USD 45 million in humanitarian aid.

According to UN figures, the ongoing violence has already displaced 578,000 people within Haiti in 2024, 300,000 cases of malnutrition have been documented and around five million people, around 50 % of the Haitian population, are affected by increased food insecurity. According to OCHA, only 24 % of the hospitals are still operational and access to basic social services such as education, health, water supply, hygiene and sanitation is either no longer available or severely restricted in some cases.<sup>11</sup>

## **India**

### **Manipur: Renewed violent ethnic clashes**

On 07.09.24, violent ethnic clashes flared up again in the Jiribam district of Manipur state on the border with Myanmar. At least six people, including one civilian, were killed and several villages were devastated.

For more than a year, violent clashes have repeatedly erupted in Manipur between the predominantly Hindu Meitei and the predominantly Christian Kukis over economic benefits, government jobs and quotas for access to education. This was triggered by a court ruling ordering the state government to grant the Meitei the benefits that had been exclusively granted to the Kukis.

Since the outbreak of the ethnic conflict in May 2023, the state with over three million inhabitants has been divided into two enclaves, a valley controlled by the majority Meitei and the mountains inhabited by the Kukis. The two enclaves are separated by a no-man's land controlled by federal paramilitary troops.<sup>12</sup>

## **Iran**

### **Arrests in the run-up to annual protest events**

According to reports by Kurdish human rights organisations, arrests were made in several Kurdish-dominated provinces between 01.09. and 04.09.24.

At least ten men were arrested by security forces in the city of Bolbanabad (Kordestan province): In the province of West Azerbaijan, four were reportedly arrested in the city of Mahabad, including a 16-year-old. In the same province, another three arrests were made in the city of Oshnavieh and one in Piranshahr. Some of those arrested are said to be relatives of victims of the nationwide protests in 2022. All arrests were made without an arrest

warrant. In addition, there is no information about the whereabouts of those arrested or any charges against them. These reports cannot be independently verified.

The arrests are presumably linked to the upcoming second anniversary of the events surrounding the death of Iranian Kurdish woman Jina Mahsa Amini in September 2022, which triggered a nationwide wave of protests that saw a high level of participation, particularly in Kurdish populated provinces.<sup>13</sup>

## **Iraq**

### **Turkish air strikes**

According to the Turkish Ministry of Defence on 02.09.24, the Turkish military destroyed 20 PKK positions by air strikes. An NGO working in the field of conflict monitoring confirmed that a total of 24 air strikes were flown in all three Kurdish provinces on 02.09.24. No damage to property or personal injury was reported.

According to media reports, a civilian was killed in a suspected Turkish air strike in the Sidakan district (Erbil province) on 03.09.24. The man was in a pasture when the attack occurred. In the past, Türkiye has frequently carried out air strikes on Sidakan to combat PKK positions. No Turkish officials have yet commented on the latest incident.

According to media reports, two drone attacks hit Sulaymaniyah province on 04.09. and 05.09.24 that set fire to a vehicle in each case. The attack on 04.09.24 took place in the Kahlakan sub-district, killing three people. Three people, including a child, also died in the attack on 05.09.24 that hit the sub-district of Chwarta. According to eyewitnesses, the people killed on 05.09.24 were wearing PKK uniforms. NGOs and the PKK itself are accusing Türkiye, which has not yet commented on the matter.<sup>14</sup>

### **Fight against IS**

On 06.09.24, the Iraqi military announced the killing of three suspected IS fighters in an air strike on an IS hideout in the Hamrin Mountains (Diyala province). This was the second major attack by Iraqi security forces within a few weeks in the Hamrin Mountains, where IS is said to have retreated into terrain that is difficult to access.

An Iraqi officer was killed and two other military personnel were injured when an explosive device attached to an Iraqi army vehicle detonated in Kirkuk province on 04.09.24.

IS remains active predominantly in rural areas, primarily in the so-called disputed territories, which are claimed by both Baghdad and Erbil. These include Kirkuk and parts of Diyala, as well as parts of Nineva and Salah al-Din.<sup>15</sup>

## **Iraq / Iran**

### **Arrest and deportation of a suspected KDPI member to Iran**

According to the Iraqi Asayish of 06.09.24, a 35-year-old Iranian national living in Sulaymaniyah (Sulaymaniyah province) was transferred to Iran. According to the Asayish, the man did not have valid residence papers, whereupon he expressed the wish to return to Iran voluntarily.

Hengaw, an Iranian-Kurdish human rights organisation, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) contradict this account. Both organisations claim that the deportee possesses a UNHCR certificate as asylum seeker and is a member of the KDPI. According to Hengaw, he was initially detained and tortured in Iraq before being handed over to the Iranian authorities. He is said to be in the custody of security authorities in Sanandaj (Kordestan province). He is accused of publishing photos of KDPI leaders on social media. He is also said to have a mental disability. The information cannot be independently verified.

An agreement signed between Iran and Iraq in 2023 stipulates that the Iraqi side is obliged to disarm Kurdish-Iranian opposition groups and secure the border regions. Iran had threatened to take military action if the agreement was not honoured (cf. BN of 17.07.23).<sup>16</sup>

## **Lebanon**

### **Situation in the Lebanese-Israeli border region**

Hezbollah and the Israeli army continue to exchange fire.

In the meantime, at least 614 people have been reported dead on the Lebanese side, including at least 138 civilians as well as 24 military personnel and 26 civilians on the Israeli side.<sup>17</sup>

## **Libya**

### **Eleven members of a human trafficking network arrested; traffickers and militia leaders killed**

On 31.08.24 the Libyan authorities announced that a human trafficking network operating in the country's south-west was discovered and eleven of its members were arrested. The detainees are accused of murder, illegal detention, torture and rape of migrants.

Meanwhile, numerous media outlets are reporting the death of the well-known militia leader and alleged human trafficker, Abdel-Rahman Milad, from the western Libyan city of Zawiya. He had been found dead in his bullet-riddled vehicle on 01.09.24. Milad, who is said to have led a coastguard unit, had been sanctioned by the UN Security Council along with other individuals for human trafficking and violence against migrants. In the case of Milad's killing, the public prosecutor's office on 07.09.24 ordered the arrest of the militia leader, Muhammad Bahroun, also from Zawiya, and one of his allies accusing them of involvement in Milad's killing.<sup>18</sup>

## **Myanmar**

### **Security situation**

Since mid-August 2024, more than 42,000 people have fled fighting between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army in the south of Rakhine State to the neighbouring Ayeyarwady region. Food and rent prices in the host communities are said to have tripled as a result. According to a report from 02.09.24, a military court in Sittwe (Rakhine) sentenced 144 people to prison for allegedly supporting insurgents. The convicts had been arrested along with another 150 people as part of a deadly military operation in the village of Byian Phu near Sittwe at the end of May 2024 (cf. BN of 10.06.24).

On 01.09.24, the military bombed a bazaar in Tigyaing (Shan State) killing nine civilians. Another person was killed in air strikes on Nawngkhio (Shan). Another civilian was killed in military attacks on Loikaw (Kayah state) on 04. and 05.09.24. The attacks were preceded by resistance forces' shelling of the city after the visit of junta leader Min Aung Hlaing on 04.09.24. On 05.09.24, the military shelled a camp for internally displaced persons in Pekon (Shan), killing ten civilians, including eight children, and injuring 14 others. At least 13 civilians were killed and 11 injured in a military air strike on Namhkan (Shan) on 06.09.24. On the same day, six civilians were killed in an air strike in Myaing (Magway region). At least ten others were injured. The military carried out further attacks on Natogyi (Mandalay region) and Mindat (Chin state).<sup>19</sup>

## **Nicaragua**

### **UN report on human rights situation; release of political prisoners; reform of the penal code**

On 02.09.24, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a report on the human rights situation in Nicaragua, covering a period of twelve months from 15.06.23. The report is based on interviews and observations by NGOs and covers cases of arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, sexualised violence and torture. The right to freedom of expression and freedom of association also continues to be systematically restricted by the government. State repression against opposition activists, government critics and independent NGOs intensified and expanded during the period under review.

After months of negotiations between the US and the Ortega government, 135 political prisoners, including several members of the Protestant and Catholic churches, were released from prison on 05.09.24 (cf. BN of 13.02.23) and flown to Guatemala. They will be given the opportunity to enter the US with a visa in order to apply for asylum there.

On 03.09.24, the National Assembly, which is controlled by the ruling FSLN party, passed a reform of several articles of the penal code (Ley 641 del Código Penal), these allow the sentencing to long prison terms of nationals outside the country in absentia for various offences, including money laundering and terrorism, and consequently to confiscate their assets. According to experts, the confiscation of property, especially from people critical of the

government and opposition figures, is already common practice in the country and would thus get a legal basis by the reform of the penal code.<sup>20</sup>

## **Nigeria**

### **Yobe State: Dozens killed in Boko Haram attack**

Around 150 suspected members of the Islamist group Boko Haram attacked the village of Mafa in the north-eastern state of Yobe on motorbikes on 01.09.24, killing at least 80 people and setting fire to several houses. According to media reports, the attack was in retaliation for the killing of two Boko Haram members by local vigilantes. A large number of people are still missing. The activities of the Islamist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) are the cause of a humanitarian disaster in north-eastern Nigeria and in parts of the neighbouring states of Cameroon, Niger and Chad. Over 35,000 people have been killed and millions displaced. Boko Haram began a violent campaign in north-eastern Nigeria in 2009 with the aim of establishing an Islamic theocracy. The group has since lost influence, but the Nigerian military has not yet succeeded in ending the threat in the region. Lately, the violence emanating from Boko Haram there and military actions against Boko Haram continues to make headlines (cf. BN of 11.03., 29.04., 17.06. and 29.07.24).<sup>21</sup>

### **Protesters charged with high treason**

On 02.09.24, the public prosecutor's office of the Federal High Court in Abuja charged ten people who had protested against the high cost of living and poor governance during the nationwide protests in early August 2024 with high treason and incitement to insurrection and other offences and provisionally detained them. According to media reports, the other offences they are charged with include setting fire to government buildings, criminal conspiracy and disturbing the public peace. The protesters had acted with the intention of destabilising Nigeria, it is said. The #EndBadGovernance protests were accompanied by some violent clashes between protesters and security forces in several places in Nigeria in the week from 01.08.24, in which at least seven people died, according to media reports. The security forces arrested more than 700 people (cf. BN of 05.08.24). The Nigerian population is currently suffering from an economic crisis.<sup>22</sup>

## **Pakistan**

### **Protests for the release of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad**

On 08.09.24, thousands of supporters of the opposition party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf rallied in Islamabad for the release of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who has been imprisoned since August 2023. The main rival of incumbent Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif remains a popular figure despite a series of criminal proceedings pending against him. Khan's first brief arrest on 09.05.23 triggered mass protests and attacks on military installations.

On 02.09.24, the government introduced a bill to regulate assemblies. The Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Bill 2024 is intended to authorise the authorities in the capital Islamabad to regulate and, if necessary, ban public gatherings and rallies.<sup>23</sup>

### **Chairman of the Balochistan Nationalist Party resigns from parliament**

On 03.09.24, the chairman of the Balochistan National Party announced his resignation as a member of the National Assembly on social media. At a subsequent press conference in Islamabad, he explained that he could not serve his ethnic group as a member of parliament and thus there was no longer any reason for him to remain in parliament. The province of Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, is home to the ethnic minority of the same name in Pakistan. The region has been the scene of uprisings and repression by the army for years. The militant Balochistan Liberation Army has been fighting the Pakistani state for decades and stages attacks mainly against government troops.<sup>24</sup>

### **Military publishes data on counter-terrorism operations in 2024**

On 05.09.24, the Pakistani army in Rawalpindi announced that it had carried out 32,173 counter-terrorism operations so far in 2024, in which 193 military personnel had been killed. In August 2024, a total of 4,021 operations were completed in which 90 suspected militants were killed. On average, there were 130 operations per

day, the army said. Terrorist groups were not specifically named but it was said that "foreign elements" were responsible for training the fighters involved in the attacks.<sup>25</sup>

## **Palestinian Territories / Israel**

### **Gaza Strip: Current developments; humanitarian situation**

The Hamas-led Ministry of Health stated on 06.09.24 that more than 40,878 Palestinians had been killed and 94,454 others wounded in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war. The ministry does not officially distinguish between combatants and civilians.

According to the Israeli military's information of 02.09.24, a total of 340 military personnel have been killed and 2,270 others wounded since the start of the ground offensive. It is assumed that Hamas is still holding 101 hostages in the Gaza Strip, 33 of whom are presumed dead. Four hostages were already being held in Gaza before the war began. At least 1,540 Israelis and citizens of other countries have been killed so far. According to the Israeli army, 17,000 Palestinian fighters have been killed until now.

Fighting in the Gaza Strip continues. The first phase of the campaign to immunise children against polio was completed on 03.09.24. A total of 187,000 children were vaccinated in central Gaza, 30,000 more than originally planned. The vaccinations were offered at over 140 locations, including humanitarian aid distribution points, hospitals and vaccination points in camps for displaced persons. The vaccination campaign became possible after various local humanitarian ceasefires had been agreed. Mobile vaccination teams were deployed as well. The second phase of the campaign focuses on South Gaza and started on 05.09.24. The vaccination campaign's third and final phase is scheduled for North Gaza as of 09.09.24.<sup>26</sup>

### **West Bank**

According to consistent reports, the Israeli armed forces withdrew from Jenin on 06.09.24. Fighting in other parts of the West Bank continues at a lower level.

On the same day, a US-Turkish activist was shot dead when a protest march against the construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank escalated violently. The exact circumstances are subject of an investigation.

On 08.09.24, a Jordanian lorry driver opened fire and killed three Israeli civilians at the border crossing between the West Bank and Jordan.<sup>27</sup>

## **Sudan**

### **Ongoing battles**

According to media reports, at least 21 people died and more than 70 were injured in a heavy artillery attack staged by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia on the town of Sennar (Sennar State) on 08.09.24. Since the capture of the regional capital Singa at the end of June 2024, Sennar has been the focus of the RSF's military efforts. The latest attack reportedly targeted the city's main market, including the fish market and residential neighbourhoods.

The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) claimed that the largest drone attack to date on the town of El-Fasher (North Darfur) was repelled on 08.09.24. According to the report, around 30 drones were shot down.

With reference to eyewitness reports, the media report that the SAF stepped up its efforts to attack positions and towns under RSF control in the last three weeks. As the civilian population is repeatedly harmed in the process the SAF's activities provoke strong protests.<sup>28</sup>

### **Humanitarian situation**

Due to the ongoing fighting and the resulting deterioration of the supply situation, more and more diseases are spreading in the country. According to the Ministry of Health, no medical aid can be provided in the areas under RSF control, nor can they be epidemiologically monitored. For example, although it is known that a new variant of Mpox (also known as monkeypox) has emerged, there is insufficient information about its spread. Similar problems concern the spread of cholera, bacterial dermatitis, scabies, tuberculosis, hepatitis, measles and other diseases.<sup>29</sup>

## **Syria**

### **Israeli air strikes**

According to Syrian state media, at least four people were killed and 13 others wounded in Israeli air strikes on targets in rural areas of the governorates of Tartus and Hama late in the evening of 08.09.24.

It was initially unclear whether the victims were civilians or members of armed groups. The Reuters news agency quotes two local intelligence sources who report that the attacks in Hama were aimed at a military research facility for the production of chemical weapons in the village of Masyaf. A team of Iranian military experts is believed to have been involved in the production of these weapons.<sup>30</sup>

### **Arrest of returnees**

According to media reports based on local sources, around 200 civilians were arrested by government troops on 03.08.24 as they passed through a checkpoint in the Damascus region. The reports say that they had been visiting relatives in north-west Syria, in areas under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al-Shams (HTS) and other opposition groups and were on their way back to Damascus.

The 200 people had travelled to the north in buses as part of a trip organised by a travel agency. According to one activist, however, the detainees had visited areas in Manbij that were under the control of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and then the city of Aleppo, which is (largely) under government control. The government forces nevertheless accused them of coming from areas under the control of opposition groups in the north.<sup>31</sup>

### **North-west: Attacks by government troops**

The pro-opposition news platform Syria TV quoted local sources on 08.09.24 which said that government forces and their allies had intensified attacks with mortar shells and suicide drones on several areas in the country's north-west. The targets included the village of Deir Sunbul south of Aleppo, the village of Kafr Taal west of Aleppo and the village of Benin, also south of Aleppo.

On 07.09.24, four children were reportedly wounded by machine gun fire aimed at the village of Umm Wartha in eastern Aleppo. Umm Wartha is under the joint control of the government and the SDF. In the previous week, more than 13 other civilians were reportedly wounded as well. Syria TV reported that the Syrian Civil Defence, also known as the White Helmets, which is active in the north-west, stated that allegedly the Russian and Syrian military attacked educational institutions in the north-west 172 times since 2019.<sup>32</sup>

## **Türkiye**

### **NGO reports on torture and ill-treatment**

The human rights organisation İnsan Hakları Derneği (İHD) published its annual report on human rights violations for the year 2023 on 23.08.24.

According to the report, a total of 5,312 people were tortured or ill-treated by security forces in 2023. It also states that 348 people were tortured or ill-treated in police custody, while 733 people were subjected to such treatment outside of detention centres. In addition, 16 people were tortured or ill-treated by so-called village guards or security guards. Furthermore, 594 detainees reported cases of torture or ill-treatment in detention centres.

According to the report, 3,487 people were beaten or injured during public protests when security forces intervened. This category represents the largest number of recorded assaults.

During the 80th session of the UN Committee against Torture (CAT) from 08.07. to 26.07.24, more than 40 NGOs submitted reports criticising torture and ill-treatment as well as the widespread impunity for security forces allegedly responsible for torture and ill-treatment as described in their reports. The reports accused Turkish authorities of using torture as a means of forcing confessions or intimidating political activists, media workers and members of the Kurdish minority. The reports on ill-treatment also refer to the conditions of detention. Inhumane conditions such as overcrowding in detention centres, denial of medical care and arbitrary solitary confinement to which political prisoners may be subjected are specifically addressed. In its fifth report on the situation in Türkiye dated 18.07.24, the CAT acknowledged and confirmed the statements made by the NGOs. The CAT report also outlines inadequacies in the legal framework concerning torture and ill-treatment. While the Turkish constitution

explicitly prohibits torture, other offences are inadequately covered. As an example, the report cites the fact that the Turkish Criminal Code does not explicitly prohibit confessions extracted under torture.<sup>33</sup>

## **Uganda**

### **Opposition politician shot**

Opposition member Kyagulanyi Ssentamu (National Unity Platform), also known as Bobi Wine, was reportedly shot and wounded in the leg by security forces on 03.09.24. The incident took place near Kampala. According to official sources, Wine, who is considered incumbent President Yoweri Museveni's strongest opponent, was prevented from crossing the road and accidentally injured. Opposition representatives described the incident as an attack. A police investigation has been ordered.<sup>34</sup>

## **Ukraine**

### **Civilian casualties and evacuation situation**

According to the governor, one person was killed in a Russian missile attack on the city of Dnipro on 02.09.24. The governor responsible for the Zaporizhzhya region reported two fatalities on 03.09.24. According to Ukrainian authorities, at least 58 people died in a Russian missile attack on Poltava. A military training centre and a neighbouring hospital were hit. So far, there is no information on how many victims were military personnel and how many civilians. According to the public prosecutor's office, one person died in Kostyantynivka (Donetsk region) as a result of Russian shelling on 04.09.24. On the same day, a Russian missile attack in Lviv claimed seven lives, according to Ukrainian authorities. The Russian occupation authorities said that three people were killed by Ukrainian shelling in the city of Donetsk on 04.09.24. A Russian missile attack on the transport hub of Pavlohrad (Dnipropetrovsk region) on 06.09.24 claimed one life, according to the governor. The Sumy region prosecutor's office reported one person killed on 06.09.24 following a Russian air strike. According to the regional military administration, two civilians died in the city of Sumy after a Russian air strike on 09.09.24. The governor of the Donetsk region reported three fatalities in Kostyantynivka and two fatalities near the city of Torezk from Russian shelling on 08.09.24. According to media reports from 09.09.24, a further three fatalities were reported for the Donetsk region and two for the Kharkiv region.

According to Caritas International, around 100,000 Ukrainians are currently fleeing the city of Pokrovsk (Donetsk region) and the surrounding area. Most of them are trying to find shelter in Dnipro in central Ukraine. Due to the tense security situation, the evacuation of civilians by train from the strategically important city has been suspended, the military administration informed. The departure station has been transferred to Pavlohrad, around 90 kilometres to the west. A bus service will be set up for the transfer. According to the Ukrainian railway company, the departure points for special evacuation trains will vary in future. However, regular trains will continue to run to and from Pokrovsk, where 30,000 people are still stranded. Due to increasing Russian shelling in the Sumy region, evacuation efforts have been extended to a further five villages in two districts close to the border, according to the governor responsible.<sup>35</sup>

### **War effort and renewed accusations of Russian war crimes**

According to data from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), which was analysed by the AFP news agency, the Russian armed forces took control of around 477 km<sup>2</sup> of Ukrainian territory in August 2024. This is the largest monthly gain since October 2022.

The Ukrainian General Prosecutor's Office again accused the Russian side of killing prisoners of war, citing corresponding internet videos. Investigations have been initiated against Russian soldiers for the alleged shooting of three surrendering Ukrainian soldiers on 27.08.24 near Pokrovsk (Donetsk region). The authorities have already registered more than 60 cases of alleged shootings during capture. The total number of Ukrainian soldiers allegedly killed in Russian captivity exceeds 110.<sup>36</sup>

### **Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant**

During his visit to the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant on 04.09.24, the Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, described the situation there as "very fragile". He said that drone strikes could

cause another blackout at any time, up to now there have already been eight blackouts. He had agreed to a Ukrainian request to extend the inspections to the substations that supply the Ukrainian nuclear power plants with electricity. In view of the extensive damage to a cooling tower caused by a fire in August 2024, for which both warring parties blamed each other, Grossi now assumes that the cooling tower will have to be demolished. According to the Ukrainian grid operator Enerhoatom, the power supply to the nuclear power plant was damaged by Russian shelling on 02.09.24.<sup>37</sup>

### **Government reshuffle**

On 03.09.24, President Zelensky announced an extensive reshuffle of his government, as well as a change in the presidential administration. He said that he intended to strengthen the government for the coming months by exchanging personnel: "The autumn will be extremely important for Ukraine. And our state institutions must be organised in such a way that Ukraine achieves all the results we need [...]". At the same time, the chairman of the parliamentary group of the ruling party "Servants of the People", Davyd Arachamiya, announced that over 50 % of the cabinet of ministers would be replaced. The dismissals would become effective on 04.09.24 and the appointments would be made on the following day, he said. The replacement of the respected Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba by his former deputy Andrij Sybiha caused an international stir. Other areas affected include defence, justice, the environment, EU integration, regional and refugee affairs. The state electricity grid operator Ukrenerho will also receive a new management. Media reports say that voices critical of the reshuffle consider it to be a consolidation of power by a small group of people loyal to the president who are linked to the head of the presidential office, Andriy Yermak.<sup>38</sup>

## **Venezuela**

### **Large-scale power outage, arrest warrant for and departure of opposition politician González Urrutia**

On 30.08.24 at least 20 of the country's federal states were affected by a massive, hour-long power outage. While the government cited acts of sabotage, people with technical expertise attributed the power outage to a lack of maintenance or system overload. As a result of the power outage, militarisation around infrastructure facilities was expanded, particularly in Caracas, and additional road checkpoints (known as alcabalas) were set up.

On 01.09.24, the NGO Foro Penal announced that over 85 young people who had been arrested during the protests had been conditionally released over the last weekend in August. However, other minors remain in custody.

On 02.09.24, the Special Court for Terrorism Proceedings in Caracas granted the application for an arrest warrant against the opposition Unitary Platform's presidential candidate González Urrutia for, among other things, usurpation of office. On 07.09.24, it was announced that González Urrutia had left Venezuela in a Spanish air force plane after spending some time in the Spanish embassy and that he had applied for political asylum in Spain. Also on 07.09.24, there were reports that the Argentinian embassy in Venezuela, which still houses employees of Vente Venezuela in embassy asylum (cf. BN of 05.08.24), had been surrounded by security forces and its power supply had been interrupted.<sup>39</sup>

## **Yemen**

### **UN demands release of employees by the Houthis**

On 03.09.24, the spokesperson for the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, called on the Houthis to release the 17 UN employees they captured so far. Most of them were arrested by the Houthis in June 2024 (cf. BN of 10.06.24). The Houthis have repeatedly accused foreign organisations, including the UN, of espionage which the UN spokesperson denied.<sup>40</sup>

## **Zimbabwe**

### **Supreme Court acquits more than 70 opposition members**

According to recent media reports, the Supreme Court released more than 70 human rights activists on 04.09.24. Three detainees were released on bail of USD 150. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the acquitted

individuals had been arrested in June 2024 for planning a protest at a meeting of the Southern African Development Community, which took place in August 2024. The number of people arrested totalled more than 100. According to press reports, numerous NGOs have been criticising the Zimbabwean government for human rights violations for decades.<sup>41</sup>

Group 62 - Asylum and Migration Information Centre

Briefing Notes

[BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de](mailto:BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de)

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