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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Disclaimer

This document was originally written in German and has been translated into English with an automatic translation tool. It is possible that translation errors may still be found. You can access the original German version here: https://milo.bamf.de/otcs/cs.exe/app/search/query_id/24179136 (external users) or https://milo.otc.bamf.in.bund.de/otcs/cs.exe/app/search/query_id/24179136 (BAMF internal users).

12 January 2026

Afghanistan

Security

During several days of protests against gold mining in Takhar province, several people have been killed and injured since January 2, 2026, in the Chah Ab district near the Samti gold mine after Taliban forces opened fire on demonstrators. Taliban authorities reported four dead and five injured, while local sources reported at least five residents killed, one company employee killed, and 16 injured. The protests are directed against the mining practices of a Chinese-Afghan operating company, which are criticized as lacking transparency, the lack of participation in its revenues, and massive damage to agriculture, infrastructure, and local water resources in the region. Since 2021, the ruling Taliban have increasingly awarded large raw material deposits to foreign companies, many of them from China, which has repeatedly led to protests by the local population.

Tajikistan has called on the Taliban to formally apologize and strengthen security measures along the shared border after two Tajik border guards were killed on December 25 in the Shamsiddin Shohin district during an armed clash with members of a group designated as a terrorist organization by Tajikistan.¹

Governance and persecution

According to media reports, a former commander who belonged to the Junbish-i-Milli Islami Afghanistan party was killed on January 7, 2026, in the Khwaja Du Koh district of Jowzjan province after being deported from Iran. shot dead by unknown armed men. After his return, he was initially arrested by the Taliban, but was released from custody two weeks before his death on bail of 800,000 AFN. He was said to have been a loyal supporter of Abdul Rashid Dostum, the leader of Junbish-i-Milli.

According to media reports from December 27, 2025, Taliban members killed a former soldier in Faryab province (Belcheragh district) and arrested another in Kabul, just days after both had been deported from Iran.

Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada has issued three decrees extending the maximum period of detention for suspects without charge from 3 to 10 days. Furthermore, it states that detainees can only be released by court order. Previously, the police and public prosecutor's office could release detainees on their own initiative if there was insufficient evidence. According to local media, legal experts believe that the new decrees will further extend detention periods and complicate judicial proceedings, heightening concerns about access to justice and legal protection under Taliban rule. Rawadari, an Afghan human rights organization, reports that the Taliban in the

northeastern province of Badakhshan are imposing fines on Ismaili families who refuse to send their children to Taliban-controlled religious schools. The Taliban are demanding fines of up to 200,000 afghani (approx. \$3,100 as of 12/01/26) from every Ismaili family whose children do not attend Hanafi Sunni religious schools.

According to local reports, Taliban morality police in Parwan province have arrested eight barbers for shaving beards. The Taliban have forced teachers in Nangarhar province to sign written commitments to grow beards.

The office of the Taliban governor in Nangarhar province said in a statement that morality police from the local Ministry of Virtue had confiscated and burned 86 musical instruments in the ninth district of the city of Jalalabad.

According to local sources in the northeastern Afghan province of Takhar, the Taliban arrested at least 25 people for playing music at a private party.

The Taliban arrested two prominent and long-standing theater artists in the western province of Herat after they criticized the group's ban on displaying images of living beings. The restriction, ordered by Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, is now in effect in 24 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. One of those detained was recently elected chairman of the province's theater artists' union. In December 2025, the Taliban also had two historic cinemas in Kabul destroyed.²

Humanitarian and economic situation

Heavy rains and snowfall in Afghanistan have ended a long dry spell, but triggered flash floods in several areas, including Herat province, killing at least 17 people and injuring 11 others, according to media reports.³

Azerbaijan

Seven media workers convicted in absentia

According to media reports, seven media professionals in exile were sentenced in absentia on December 26, 2025. Two of them were sentenced to 14 years in prison and five to nine years in prison. They were accused of, among other things, "fraud by an organized group" (Art. 178 para. 3.1 of the Criminal Code (StGB)), "public calls for terrorism" (Art. 214 para. 2 StGB), "incitement to mass unrest" (Art. 220 para. 2 StGB), "armed insurrection" (Art. 281 para. 2 StGB) and "document forgery" (Art. 329 para. 1 StGB).

Since the beginning of 2025, 24 government critics living abroad have been charged in absentia with various crimes, including the seven convicted persons. In an analysis, lawyer Samad Rahimli found that criminal proceedings in absentia have become the Azerbaijani government's main tool for prosecuting government critics abroad. Other measures of cross-border repression reportedly include violence abroad, pressure through extradition requests, digital attacks, and attacks on family members remaining in Azerbaijan.⁴

Bangladesh

Violence after murder of protest leader

On December 12, 2025, masked assailants shot student leader and opposition politician Sharif Osman Hadi in Dhaka. Hadi was a key figure in the protest movement that overthrew long-time Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed, who has since been sentenced to death for crimes against humanity, in the summer of 2024. He was also a prominent critic of the Indian government, which continues to grant Hasina protection, and wanted to run as an independent candidate in the February 2026 parliamentary elections.

After he died of his injuries on December 18, 2025, hundreds of Hadi's supporters gathered for a demonstration. During the demonstration, protesters stormed several buildings, including the home of Hasina's father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the offices of the Daily Star and Prothom Alo newspapers, setting them on fire. All affected employees were able to escape. Both newspapers are considered progressive and published investigative reports on arrests and disappearances of opposition figures under Hasina's authoritarian rule. However, as the mob mobilized via the internet, the newspapers were accused of having a pro-Indian stance. According to media reports, this could be due to the Daily Star and Prothom Alo's sometimes critical stance toward the transitional government under Muhammad Yunus and the interests of the religious right and ultra-nationalist, right-wing extremist groups, including the Jamaat-e-Islami party. The transitional government condemned the attacks on journalists as "attacks on the truth itself" and declared December 20, 2025, a national day of mourning for Hadi.⁵

Belarus

Human rights situation in 2025

According to the Belarusian exile NGO Viasna, as of December 31, 2025, there were approximately 1,131 political prisoners in Belarusian prisons, including 167 women. According to the NGO, a total of 8,000 convictions in politically motivated criminal proceedings have been documented since 2020, including 39 people who were forcibly admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Of these, 4,339 people have been identified as political prisoners. However, 3,208 people have been released from prison so far for reasons such as serving their sentence, remission of sentence, or change in detention status, including 659 women. Furthermore, according to Viasna, at least 1,254 people were convicted in politically motivated criminal proceedings in 2025, including 899 men (72%) and 355 women (28%); 45 people were of retirement age. At least 30 people were convicted in absentia in 2025. At least 555 people were sentenced to house arrest, at least 42 to open prison, and at least 306 to prison terms. The most common charge in politically motivated trials was participation in protests. In 2025, at least 643 people were convicted under Article 342 of the Criminal Code ("organizing, preparing, or participating in actions that constitute a serious violation of public order") in this context. Furthermore, in December 2025, at least 20 families were recorded among the political prisoners. Throughout 2025, 189 political prisoners were forcibly deported from Belarus after being pardoned and released.⁶

Imprisonment of individuals supporting Ukraine in the war

According to media reports from January 2, 2026, citing activist circles, around 200 Belarusian citizens have so far been sentenced to prison terms for violating, among other things, a law prohibiting "participation in or preparation for participation in hostilities on foreign soil" and "recruitment, training, and financing of such activities." One man is serving a five-year prison sentence for donating the equivalent of approximately USD 10 to a unit of Belarusian volunteers fighting for Ukraine. Another man, who fought in a Belarusian volunteer unit for several weeks in 2022, was also sentenced to five years in prison in early 2025. According to the human rights group Dissidentby, the law is being applied selectively. Individuals who were arrested and convicted for fighting for Ukraine received prison sentences ranging from five to 13 years. According to a lawyer from the NGO Viasna, this offense is not classified as a serious crime under the Criminal Code and provides for alternative penalties to imprisonment. Nevertheless, imprisonment is being imposed arbitrarily, mainly for political reasons.⁷

China

Raid against Christian community in Zhejiang

According to reports by the Yesterday Project, which documents protests in the People's Republic of China, the online magazine on religious freedom and human rights Bitter Winter, and the human rights organization ChinaAid, security forces arrested over 100 Christians in the Yayang community (Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province) between December 13 and December 18.

The arrests are said to have been carried out as part of a large-scale operation involving SWAT units from several surrounding cities. In addition to house searches, the operation included setting up checkpoints at the entrances to the town, blocking access roads to the church, setting off fireworks in the square in front of the local government headquarters on the evening of December 15, strict censorship of social media, and a "mobilization event" with police and government officials as part of the campaign to eliminate the "six tyrants" (including individuals who disrupt public order in communities) on December 18, 2025. The raid focused on two central figures in the local church, Lin Enzhao and Lin Enci, who had previously been wanted as "prime suspects in a criminal gang." Both had spoken out in June 2025 against the erection of a Chinese flag at the church entrance; Lin Enzhao had also come under the scrutiny of the authorities in 2014 for protesting against the demolition of a cross.

In October 2025, authorities in several provinces arrested eight pastors and 21 other members of the Church of Zion (see BN, Oct. 20, 2025). Eighteen of them now face up to three years in prison for the illegal use of information networks.⁸

Arrests after protests in Tibet

As reported by several Tibetan human rights organizations at the end of December 2025, around 80 Tibetans were arrested during protests against a gold mining project on nomadic grazing land in the municipality of Gayixiang (Tibetan: Kashi; Garze district, Sichuan province) on November 5 and 6, 2025. Seven of them are currently considered missing. Those who were released reported that they were physically abused during their detention and forced to make false confessions and vows of silence. In addition, security forces are said to have confiscated mobile phones from people in the vicinity of the protesters and installed surveillance technology in private homes. According to an international daily newspaper, the information provided by witnesses cannot be independently verified.⁹

DR Congo

Security situation in eastern Congo – Repeated attacks by the CRP

While attention in the east of the country continues to focus largely on the provinces of North and South Kivu, the security situation in Ituri province has deteriorated since December 5, 2025, due to repeated attacks by the Convention pour la Revolution Populaire (CRP).

According to media reports, clashes between the Congolese army (FARDC) and the CRP are concentrated in the town of Bule in the Djugu territory, about 95 km northeast of the provincial capital Bunia. Control of Bule is said to change regularly between the FARDC and the CRP. According to UN sources, at least 25 civilians were killed and 40 injured in the fighting last month. On January 8, 2025, a commander of the MONUSCO peacekeeping forces put the number of victims of armed violence in the region at 152. He said the humanitarian situation was critical and that the conflict was preventing access to aid for more than 87,000 internally displaced persons in the region around Bule.

The political-military movement CRP was officially founded by Thomas Lubanga on March 23, 2025. Lubanga accused the government in Kinshasa of plundering the province of Ituri and neglecting it due to the conflict in Kivu.¹⁰

Security situation in eastern Congo – Further attacks by the ADF

On the evening of January 1, 2026, the Islamist Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) once again attacked villages in the Lubero region of North Kivu. According to media reports, three villages in the immediate vicinity were attacked simultaneously. Lubero's military administrator put the death toll at 16. With this renewed attack, the ADF is following a pattern of deadly attacks on civilians. According to MONUSCO, the ADF was responsible for the murder of 89 civilians in November 2025 alone, 29 of them during the attack on Byambwe on the night of November 15, 2025 (see BN of November 24, 2025). In addition, there were 15 attacks in the Baswagha region alone in the week of November 17, 2025. Although the number of incidents in the region around Mambasa has recently declined, the ADF has consolidated its rule there through, among other things, forced taxation and conversion ceremonies to Islam. There are also reports pointing to possible training centers in Mambasa.¹¹

Security situation in western Congo

In the wake of the conflict between the Teke and Yaka communities, fighting broke out on December 27 and 28, 2025, between the Congolese army (FARDC) and the Mobondo militia, allied with the Yaka, in the town of Bolingo on the outskirts of Kinshasa. According to media reports, 15 Mobondo fighters and five FARDC soldiers were killed. The conflict originally began as a land dispute in the Kwamouth area in Mai-Nombe province (see BN of December 1, 2025). Due to the conflict's advance toward the capital, a FARDC spokesperson on 12/29/25 referred to the Mobondo for the first time not as a "militia" but as a "rebellion" and demanded their surrender. In addition, the movement is said to be supported by individuals close to the government, for which there is evidence according to the FARDC.¹²

Ethiopia

Reports of civilian killings in Amhara and Gambela

According to reports, on December 23, 2025, three civilians were killed in Debre Elias (East Goja Zone, Amhara) by members of the Fano militia. The victims were three women aged between 17 and 19. While the Fano accused the women of espionage, regional administration officials believe that the victims were ordinary civilians.

In addition, on 24.12.25, approximately 47 civilians were killed and dozens injured in Tharpam (Itang Special District, Gambela) in the context of ethnic conflicts. Due to the continuing uncertain situation, a night-time curfew was imposed in the nearby capital Gambela and the surrounding area. The current unrest was triggered by ethnically motivated conflicts between members of the Nuer and Anuak tribes in mid-December 2025 (see BN of 22 December 2025). Although the situation in Gambela has calmed down again, the supply situation for internally displaced persons and refugees in surrounding refugee camps remains tense, with access to water and food partially cut off and aid deliveries delayed due to roadblocks.¹³

Guinea

Doumbouya wins presidential election

Junta leader Mamadi Doumbouya won the presidential election on December 28, 2025, with 86.7% of the vote, with voter turnout reported at just under 81%. According to media reports, the opposition described the election as a "charade" and complained of electoral interference and fraud. Observation missions from ECOWAS and the AU, on the other hand, described the election as peaceful and reported no major irregularities. The election took place in an authoritarian and restrictive climate. The two main opposition parties, the UFDG and the RPG, were suspended, and the three main opposition politicians, Cellou Dalein Diallo (UFDG), Alpha Condé (RPG), and Sidya Touré (UFR), were excluded from the election (see BN of November 10 and December 8, 2025). The election is the first since the coup led by Doumbouya in September 2021. It is intended to end the transition phase and mark the return to civilian rule (see BN of 10.11.25).¹⁴

Iran

Nationwide wave of protests

According to ongoing media reports, protests have been ongoing since Dec. 28, 2025, in the capital Tehran and all 31 provinces of the country. There have been multiple reports of violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces. Following a nationwide internet blockade and disruption of the mobile phone network, the flow of information remains limited.

According to varying reports from human rights organizations on January 11, 2026, more than 500 people, including 48 security forces, have been killed and more than 10,600 demonstrators arrested. These figures cannot be independently confirmed.

On January 9, 2026, the Persian edition of BBC News confirmed the identities of several people killed in the protests, including minors, based on an analysis of video footage. Meanwhile, Iranian authorities reported the deaths of several security forces.

According to media reports on January 8 and 9, 2026, the demonstrations had initially spread to cities in at least 17 provinces between December 28, 2025, and January 6, 2026, and, according to human rights organizations, had spread to all 31 provinces of the country by January 9, 2026. According to consistent

According to media reports, further violent clashes occurred from January 7, 2026. According to human rights organizations, in addition to demonstrators, security forces were also injured or killed, including in Mashhad (Razavi Khorasan Province), Abadan (Khuzestan Province), and Aligudarz (Lorestan Province).

Varying figures on the number of casualties could not be independently confirmed.

According to media reports from January 9, 2026, protests intensified overnight on January 9 and on January 10 in several cities, including Tehran, Mashhad, Shiraz (Fars Province), Sharoud (Seman Province), Bushehr, and Isfahan (provinces of the same name). Video footage on social media showed peaceful demonstrations and large crowds, as well as burning barricades and vehicles, and billboards and buildings set on fire, including government buildings

and mosques. According to BBC News on January 9, 2026, peaceful protest rallies in Tehran were not dispersed by security forces, at least in some cases. In the city of Zahedan (Sistan and Baluchistan province), security forces used buckshot and tear gas against demonstrators on January 9, 2026. Several people were injured. According to information from an Iranian human rights organization based in the US on January 11, 2026, there were more than 200 arrests in Zahedan.

The Persian edition of the British news channel BBC reported on January 10, 2026, that more than 100 demonstrators had been killed in the cities of Tehran and Rasht (Gilan province). Iranian authorities are said to have demanded ransom from relatives of the victims for the release of the deceased. The capacity of local morgues and hospitals is said to have been greatly exceeded, forcing bodies to be stacked on top of each other.

The US Institute for the Study of War (ISW) reported less protest activity on January 11, 2026, compared to previous days. However, according to the ISW, the decline could be due to ongoing internet blackouts.

The online portal Netblocks, which documents restrictions on internet freedom, reported internet disruptions on January 8, 2026, and ongoing nationwide internet outages since January 9, 2026, which consequently makes overall reporting difficult. On the same day, the Iranian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology confirmed the internet shutdown as a measure due to the security situation.

Protesters across the country are chanting slogans and singing songs calling for the overthrow of revolutionary leader Ali Khamenei and, in some cases, the return of the son of the late former Shah, Reza Pahlavi, who lives in the US. Pahlavi had previously called for protests on January 9 and 10, 2026, on social media. However, according to an expert at Johns Hopkins University, it is controversial whether Pahlavi would have the support of Iranian society for his proclaimed role as leader of an opposition to the government, as he has no political organization in Iran.

On January 9, 2026, Revolutionary Leader Ali Khamenei and Chief Justice Mohseni-Ejei advocated for security forces to take harsh action against demonstrators. A few days earlier, Khamenei had called for a distinction to be made between protesters who should be taken seriously and those he described as "rioters." President Massoud Pezeshkian, on the other hand, had signaled understanding for the protesters' demands and called for a friendly and responsible approach to demonstrators.

The wave of protests began on December 28, 2025, when shop owners and traders in the bazaar and business district of the capital Tehran took to the streets to protest against the sharp decline in the value of the Iranian currency, the rial (IRR), against the US dollar (USD) and against a significant increase in the cost of living. Within a few days, the demonstrations spread to other cities and parts of the country and increasingly targeted the government system as a whole.¹⁵

Kazakhstan

Law against "LGBT and pedophilia propaganda"

According to media reports, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed a law on December 30, 2025, banning "LGBT and pedophilia propaganda" in the media, telecommunications networks, and online platforms. The law, which was previously passed by both houses of parliament, will come into force 60 days after its publication. According to the law, violations will be punishable by a fine of approximately USD 140, or approximately USD 280 in the case of repeat offenses, and imprisonment for up to ten days. The law was passed in response to a citizens' initiative launched in 2024 calling for a ban on LGBT propaganda. It cites the need to protect children from such content. Human rights groups have already announced that they will challenge the ban in court.¹⁶

Kosovo

Results of the early parliamentary election

On December 28, 2025, the second parliamentary election of 2025 took place. According to the Central Election Commission (KQZ), voter turnout was 45.36%. The Self-Determination Party (LVV) of incumbent Prime Minister Albin Kurti won the election with 51.11% of the vote, but failed to secure an absolute majority of seats. However, it could secure a governing majority by cooperating with ethnic minority parties. The Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) came in second with 20.19% of the vote, followed by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) with 13.23%.

Due to the election date and the possibility of voting at diplomatic missions, a large number of the diaspora took part in the parliamentary elections.

The early parliamentary elections took place against the backdrop of a ten-month parliamentary stalemate (see BN of 22.09. and 13.10.25) and recurring review processes by the Election Complaints and Appeals Commission (PZAP). Shortly before the election, the EU lifted its sanctions against Kosovo in response to the peaceful conduct of the local elections in October 2025 and the inauguration of Serbian mayors in the predominantly Serbian municipalities in northern Kosovo.¹⁷

Lebanon

Situation in the Lebanese-Israeli border area

Israeli attacks on targets, mainly in southern Lebanon, continue to occur on a regular basis. According to Israeli sources, these attacks are directed at Hezbollah targets.

On January 8, 2026, the Lebanese army issued a statement saying that the first phase of Hezbollah's disarmament had been completed. This mainly involved Hezbollah taking effective control of the region south of the Litani River. The Lebanese army acknowledges that the destruction of Hezbollah's weapons stockpiles and infrastructure will still take a considerable amount of time.

Israel described the statement as "encouraging," but noted that Hezbollah was still arming itself faster than it was being disarmed. Since the end of open fighting between Hezbollah and Israel, approximately 390 people have been killed in Israeli attacks. According to OHCHR figures from November 2025, at least 127 of these were civilians.¹⁸

Libya

Army chief killed in plane crash

According to media reports, the crash of an aircraft on December 23, 2025, shortly after takeoff in the Turkish capital Ankara, killed the chief of staff of the Libyan military, Mohammed Ali Ahmed al-Haddad, as well as four other high-ranking military officials and three crew members. An investigation into the causes of the crash is still ongoing.

Al-Haddad, who had led the army of the internationally recognized Government of National Unity (GNU) based in Tripoli, was returning from official talks with the Turkish defense minister.¹⁹

Protest against UNSMIL

According to media reports, on January 5, 2026, an unknown number of demonstrators gathered near the headquarters of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to protest against the increasing interference of foreign forces in Libya's internal affairs. According to the demonstrators, UNSMIL's work is prolonging the country's instability and hindering the electoral process. At the same time, they called for a clear timetable for the formation of a national unity government with the central task of preparing Libya for free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections as soon as possible.²⁰

Myanmar

Elections

On December 28, 2025, and January 11, 2026, the military junta held elections in a total of 202 of the country's 330 municipalities with the self-declared goal of "returning Myanmar to a democratic multi-party system." Elections are scheduled to be held in a further 63 municipalities on January 25, 2026, while the remaining 65 municipalities are currently contested or administered by resistance groups. Six parties are standing for election at the national level, including the military-aligned Union Solidarity and Development Party, which currently has a large lead, as well as 51 other parties and independent candidates at the state and regional levels. Around 40 parties have been banned, including the National League for Democracy led by Aung San Suu Kyi, who was overthrown in a military coup in February 2021 and remains in detention. She had been acting as de facto head of government in the office of State Counsellor, which was created for her in 2016. According to the junta, voter turnout on December 28, 2025,

was around 52%. State media reported violent disruptions to the first phase of the election by "terrorist groups" in eleven municipalities in Kachin, Kayah, and Kayin states and in Mandalay, Sagaing, and Tanintharyi regions. According to state sources, five civilians were injured. International media and Myanmar exile media reported air strikes and explosions in several regions, killing one child in Myawaddy (Kayin) and injuring at least six civilians nationwide. During the second phase of the election on January 11, 2026, four municipalities reported attacks on polling stations and government buildings. Two administrative staff members were injured in Htantabin (Bago region), one of them fatally. Over 200 people were charged with disrupting or resisting the election, including director Mike Tie, actor Kyaw Win Htut, and comedian Ohn Dai. They were each sentenced to seven years in prison for criticizing an election campaign film. International observers described the election as a "farce"; Tom Andrews, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, spoke in a statement of an "absurd play performed with armed force."²¹

Nicaragua

Government orders release of political prisoners

According to media reports, the government issued a statement on January 10, 2026, announcing the "return of dozens of people who were in the custody of the competent authorities." According to the reports, this also includes individuals imprisoned for political reasons. NGOs confirmed that at least 24 political prisoners had been released by January 12, 2026. At the same time, they argued that the release did not signify a shift toward democratization in the country. Rather, it was a gesture toward the US, which had already demanded the immediate release of all political prisoners on December 5, 2025, from the Nicaraguan government, which it described as a "dictatorship." By January 9, 2026, at least 60 people had also been arrested for allegedly celebrating the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on January 3, 2026, or expressing their support for it.²²

Nigeria

Northwest: US air strike on suspected Islamists

On December 25, 2025, US forces attacked camps operated by suspected Islamist groups near the border with Niger in Sokoto State. According to media reports, an unknown number of people were killed in the air strike. According to the Nigerian Foreign Ministry, these were precision strikes against terrorist targets. Nigeria is cooperating with the US in the fight against militant groups.²³

Niger State: Raid on village leaves several dead

On January 3, 2026, armed men on motorcycles attacked a market in the village of Demo in Niger State, killing at least 30 people and kidnapping an unknown number of others. According to media reports, the attackers also looted and set fire to shops. The attack appears to be part of a series. The local population complains about the lack of security forces. President Bola Tinubu has ordered the immediate release of all those kidnapped and the strengthening of security measures in the region.²⁴

Pakistan

Life sentences for eight media workers

On January 2, 2026, a so-called anti-terrorism court sentenced eight media workers to life imprisonment in absentia. They were accused of supporting the violent protests of May 9, 2023, which broke out after the arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, through their online activities. At that time, Khan's supporters attacked military facilities, among other things.

Since then, the Pakistani government, together with the military, has been cracking down on Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and voices critical of the government. Hundreds of people have been charged in military courts. Most of those convicted, including former army officers and well-known journalists, are abroad and were not informed about the proceedings.²⁵

Attacks on security forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

On December 23, 2025, five police officers were killed in an ambush on a police transporter in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, according to government sources. The attackers used a bomb and then opened fire. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack. The security forces killed eight of the attackers in retaliation. On January 4, 2026, at least four police officers were killed in two separate attacks in KP. In the district of Lakki Marwat, unknown motorcyclists shot and killed three traffic police officers. In the district of Bannu, another police officer was shot and killed on his way to work. No group claimed responsibility for these attacks. On January 6, 2026, the Pakistani military reiterated that the Afghan Taliban actively supports groups such as al-Qaeda, IS, TTP, and their splinter groups. In addition, approximately 2,500 foreign fighters entered Afghanistan after Assad's fall, mainly from Syria.²⁶

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Gaza: Current developments

Violations of the ceasefire continue. According to local health authorities, on January 4, 2026, three Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli forces in various incidents in Khan Yunis under unknown circumstances, including a minor, a fisherman, and a person who was in areas under Israeli military control. On January 5, 2026, according to media reports, a tent for internally displaced persons in the al-Muwasi area was hit by an Israeli attack, killing two people, including a toddler, and injuring other children. During several Israeli airstrikes on January 8, 2026, in various parts of the Gaza Strip, which the Israeli army said were in response to rocket fire from the Hamas-controlled area, at least 13 Palestinians were killed, according to local health workers, who were staying in tents and a school used as emergency shelter, among other places. On January 11, 2026, three more Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces in both Hamas- and Israeli-controlled areas. According to the Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip, the number of Palestinians killed since the October 2025 ceasefire agreement stands at over 440. While the Israeli army mostly stated that the majority of the incidents involved the destruction of military infrastructure or individuals who posed a threat to Israeli forces by crossing the ceasefire line, various media reports indicate that most of those killed were civilians.

On December 26, 2025, al-Awda Hospital in the center of the Gaza Strip announced that it had temporarily suspended most of its services due to a lack of fuel for its generators. Only the emergency room, maternity ward, and pediatric ward remained in operation.

The humanitarian situation is further exacerbated by the effects of winter weather conditions with persistent heavy rainfall and storms: According to UNICEF, a child drowned on December 27, 25 as a result of the flooding in a refugee camp in Gaza City. According to reports, at least six children died as a result of the flooding or the collapse of damaged buildings caused by it. The Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip reported the deaths of several children from hypothermia in connection with this. According to UN OCHA, the heavy rain triggered flash floods that particularly affected people in low-lying areas, coastal regions, and temporary shelters. Many families were forced to flee again to higher ground.

On January 4, 2026, the Israeli government informed the Israeli Supreme Court that it intended to maintain the ban on international journalists entering the Gaza Strip, which has been in place since October 2023.²⁷

West Bank: Attacks by Israeli forces and settlers

Between December 23, 2025, and January 5, 2026, UN OCHA documented 44 attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians, resulting in injuries, expulsions, and property damage. With over 1,800 attacks and more than 830 injuries, mainly in the governorates of Ramallah, Nablus, and Hebron, 2025 was the most violent year since UN OCHA began recording data in 2006. According to the report, the majority of attacks (70%) were carried out by Israeli settlers, while 28% were carried out by Israeli forces. According to an Israeli NGO, 80 outposts were established in the West Bank in 2025, the highest number since it began recording data in 1991. In addition, more than two dozen families are said to have left the village of Ras Ein al-Auja in the Jordan Valley since January 8, 2026, as a result of ongoing settler violence.

According to media reports, on December 26, 2025, hundreds of Israeli forces stormed the city of Tubas in the northern West Bank. Several families are said to have been temporarily evicted from their homes for use by the Israeli army. As part of Israel's "Iron Wall" operation in the northern refugee camps of the West Bank, which has

been ongoing since the beginning of 2025, dozens of houses in Nur Shams were demolished by military bulldozers on December 31, 2025, according to various reports. According to a satellite image analysis by Human Rights Watch, the Israeli military has destroyed or damaged at least 850 buildings in the Nur Shams, Jenin, and Tulkarem refugee camps since the offensive began. Approximately 50,000 residents have been displaced from the camps since then. According to Israeli sources, the operation is aimed at destroying the infrastructure of militant groups. Between December 23, 2025, and January 5, 2026, UN OCHA also documented the demolition of around 50 buildings in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank, which is said to have displaced 53 Palestinians. These were mainly residential buildings, shops, and agricultural buildings.

On January 1, 2026, the Israeli military announced that it had killed a Palestinian in the village of Luban al-Sharqiya, and two other Palestinians were injured in the incident. According to Palestinian media reports, Israeli forces had closed the main entrance to the village the day before and blocked several side roads.

On January 6, 2026, Israeli forces stormed the Birzeit University campus, according to various media reports. Live ammunition, stun grenades, and tear gas were reportedly used, injuring at least eleven students. The attack followed a solidarity event for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and took place shortly before a film screening about the story of a child who was shot dead by Israeli troops during the Gaza war. The Israeli army said it had taken action against a "gathering in support of terrorism."²⁸

Israel: Restriction/ban on dozens of aid organizations

On December 29, 2025, the Israeli parliament passed a law prohibiting the supply of electricity and water to facilities owned or operated on behalf of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The law also prohibits the provision of communications, banking, and financial services to the UN agency, revokes its diplomatic immunity, and allows Israeli authorities to expropriate two UNRWA offices in East Jerusalem.

Furthermore, according to various media reports, Israel suspended the activities of 37 humanitarian aid organizations, including Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), as of January 1, 2026, for non-compliance with new registration requirements. According to these reports, the organizations were required, among other things, to submit lists of their

Palestinian and international employees, including their passport numbers, to the Israeli authorities for verification. The organizations now affected by the ban had not submitted these documents by the end of 2025, according to their own statements, for fear of endangering their employees. The organizations concerned lost their permits with effect from January 1, 2026, and must leave the Gaza Strip by March 1, 2026. Since the beginning of January 2026, international personnel have been banned from entering the Gaza Strip. According to Israeli sources, the new regulations were intended to prevent the alleged infiltration of aid organizations by Hamas and other militant groups. The aid organizations, on the other hand, sharply criticized the revocation of licenses and warned of the consequences for the supply of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip; according to them, the number of organizations still licensed by Israel is far from sufficient to meet basic needs alone. According to media reports, the medical sector is expected to be the hardest hit: According to its own figures, MSF most recently operated more than 20% of the remaining hospital beds and clinics for people with chronic diseases, performed over 22,000 operations in 2025, and treated over 100,000 trauma cases. Overall, the vast majority of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip depends on the help of UN organizations and international NGOs for their daily survival.²⁹

Russian Federation

Searches and prosecution of indigenous peoples' activists

According to a report dated December 20, 2025, human rights activist Darya Egereva, co-chair of the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change, member of the UN Coordinating Body for Indigenous Peoples, and representative for the rights of the Selkup people of Western Siberia, was arrested in Moscow on December 17, 2025. Egereva is being investigated for participating in the activities of a terrorist organization under Article 205.5, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Code. A conviction would result in a prison sentence of ten to 20 years. Egereva is accused of participating in the "Aboriginal Forum." According to reports, this is considered an informal association of activists from indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East, which, at the end of 2024, along with 172 other predominantly "decolonial" organizations and media outlets, was placed on the list of terrorist

organizations as a sub-organization of the "Forum of Free States of Post-Russia." MROs link Egereva's arrest to her work on indigenous issues at the UN and her long-standing human rights work for the Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN). The CSIPN was explicitly named in Resolution 60/21 of the UN Human Rights Council on October 7, 2025, as an organization that was forced to close by the Russian Federation. In addition to Egereva, another activist for the rights of indigenous peoples is said to have been arrested on December 17, 2025, on terrorism charges.

In addition, on December 17, 2025, law enforcement agencies reportedly conducted searches and interrogations of 17 other human rights activists representing indigenous peoples in several other regions of Russia. Indigenous organizations speak of a "large-scale wave of repression against representatives of the indigenous peoples of Russia."

According to a UN report dated September 15, 2025, indigenous groups and other organizations advocating for the interests of ethnic minorities are increasingly affected by criminal prosecution under laws on "foreign agents," "undesirable organizations," "extremism," and "terrorism." In addition, members of indigenous peoples are disproportionately and often forcibly conscripted into military service for the war against Ukraine, which means that some small indigenous communities are "threatened with extinction" due to the high number of war casualties.³⁰

Somalia

Israel recognizes Somaliland

According to media and government reports, the Israeli government recognized the Somali region of Somaliland as an autonomous, sovereign state at the end of December 2025. Somaliland has claimed independence since 1991, governs autonomously within its borders, and is seeking international recognition (see BN of 08/11/25). The Somali federal government in Mogadishu continues to regard Somaliland as part of Somalia, describes Israel's recognition of Somaliland as "illegitimate" and has now called for foreign military intervention against Somaliland. Political unity in Somalia, however, is weak and relations between the government in Mogadishu and other Somali regions are fractured (see BN of 12/22/25).³¹

Syria

Fighting and displacement in predominantly Kurdish neighborhoods of Aleppo

According to media reports, three people were killed on December 22, 2025, in fighting between the transitional government's security forces and the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Both sides accused each other of escalating the conflict. According to their own statements, the leaders of both sides ordered a cessation of hostilities. According to the Syrian state news agency SANA, two civilians were killed and eight others wounded. The SDF, on the other hand, said that one woman was killed and 17 civilians were wounded in the Ashrafiyeh and Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhoods. According to further reports, two members of the Syrian Civil Defense were also wounded by snipers.

A few weeks later, on January 6 and 7, 2026, more people, mostly civilians, were killed in renewed fighting in the two districts. The following day, the Syrian military declared that there were legitimate military targets in the two districts and called on their residents to leave the areas around these targets. Various political figures accused the transitional government of seeking to promote ethnic cleansing in Aleppo through the expulsions.

After several days of fighting in the districts of Ashrafiyeh, Sheikh Maqsoud, and Bani Zeid, a ceasefire was reached, according to the transitional government. Kurdish fighters were to leave these districts by January 9, 2026, and be taken to the northeast of the country. However, according to reports, the Kurdish fighters refused to leave the neighborhoods and stated that they intended to defend them. Further fighting ensued before the SDF leadership and Kurdish fighters agreed to the evacuation on January 11, 2026. According to the state news agency SANA, the last Kurdish fighters were taken by bus to northeastern Syria.

According to the governor of Aleppo, approximately 155,000 people fled the neighborhoods affected by the fighting. They sought refuge mainly in the Afrin district and other parts of Aleppo. At least 24 civilians are said to have been killed and more than 120 others wounded during the fighting. This figure only includes cases recorded

by the transitional government's health directorate, not the dead and wounded within the affected neighborhoods themselves. According to reports, during the evacuations or expulsions, around 300 young Kurdish men who left the neighborhoods were arrested by the security forces on suspicion of being Kurdish fighters. The Asayish rejected these allegations and emphasized that they were civilians.

Authorities and security forces of the transitional government are now taking over state services in the neighborhoods. The first movements of displaced residents to return began on January 11, 2026. However, according to government information, many people will only be able to return once the affected areas have been decontaminated of explosive remnants of war.

During the fighting, the Turkish military stated that it was ready to support the Syrian military if the Syrian leadership so desired. However, according to media reports, there was initially no intervention by Turkish troops or air support. In the past, Turkey had threatened to intervene if the Kurdish fighters, whom Turkey considers to be an extension of the PKK, which is classified as a terrorist organization, did not integrate into the Syrian state apparatus.

In the course of the recent fighting, which has now spread to rural areas such as Deir Hafer, Maskana, and al-Khafsa, air traffic at Aleppo airport was temporarily suspended and had not resumed by the morning of January 12, 2026. Schools, government institutions, and shops in Aleppo remained closed for days.³²

Central Syria: Several cases of killings by unknown perpetrators

According to media reports, two people were killed and three others wounded in attacks by unidentified perpetrators in Salamiya, Hama Governorate, on December 20, 2025 alone. Rumors of a sectarian motive arose because the attack took place in a predominantly Ismaili area and, according to witness statements, the shooting was random. Syrian security forces subsequently stated that they had secured the area.

Two other Syrians were shot dead by unknown perpetrators on the same day on an agricultural road in the northwest of Homs Governorate. The day before, two brothers had been shot dead when armed individuals stormed a gold shop near al-Halak.³³

Latakia: Fighting between security forces and former Assad supporters

According to media reports, intense fighting broke out between security forces and armed fighters, consisting of former Assad supporters, during a raid by security forces in the village of Baabda, near the village of Jableh, on December 24, 2025.

The raid was reportedly aimed at arresting wanted persons. According to state reports, three former Assad supporters were killed in connection with the fighting. Two members of the security forces were wounded.

A few days later, the Syrian authorities announced the arrest of a former member of Assad's secret service apparatus in Dar'a, who was accused of serious crimes. Twelve other former officers of Assad's army were arrested on the night of December 26, 2025, while attempting to smuggle themselves from Lebanon into Syria. Shortly before that, the transitional government's security forces had prevented a similar attempt by 14 former Assad military personnel from Lebanon to enter the country.³⁴

Suweida: Jordanian air strike against smugglers; fighting between government and militias

According to media reports, on December 24, 2025, the Jordanian military carried out cross-border air strikes on locations used for arms and drug smuggling. These were located near the village of al-Shaab in the southeast of the Suweida governorate and near the village of Umm Rumman in the southwest of the governorate, as well as on the road between Khazma and Malih.

The governorate is largely under the control of the so-called "National Guard," a militia alliance that opposes the government in Damascus. There are no reports of casualties.

According to further reports, seven people were wounded in fighting between government security forces and Druze militias on January 3, 2026. The fighting took place between the towns of al-Mazraa and Walgha in the west of the governorate. Both sides accused each other of violating the ceasefire signed in July.³⁵

Homs: Eight dead in attack on mosque; several dead in Alawite protests in Latakia

According to media reports, at least eight people were killed and 21 others wounded when an explosive device detonated in an Alawite mosque in the Homs governorate on December 26, 2025, during Friday prayers. A few hours after the attack, the group Saraya Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for the attack. The group, which was

formed after the fall of the Assad government, had already claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on a church in Damascus in June 2025 that killed 25 people. The attack sparked widespread protests in the Alawite-inhabited coastal region and parts of central Syria. The protests were met with counter-protests by government supporters. There were several attacks, after which the security forces broke up the protests. According to reports by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, at least three participants were killed during the breakup of the protests in Latakia city. Other media reported two participants and one member of the security forces killed. In Latakia city and elsewhere, at least 60 people are said to have been wounded. The authorities did not initially confirm the use of live ammunition and stated that "remnants" of the Assad regime had attacked the security forces. A prominent Alawite dignitary, Ghazal Ghazal, had called for the protests.

On December 29, 2025, there were further attacks and vandalism in predominantly Alawite neighborhoods in Latakia city, prompting the security authorities to impose a curfew. According to official reports, 21 people who had previously been close to the Assad government and its security apparatus and were allegedly involved in crimes were detained during the curfew. They had called for sectarian behavior and attacked security forces.³⁶

Introduction of new banknotes

The Syrian Central Bank began issuing the new Syrian pound (SYP) banknotes on January 3, 2026. As part of the currency reform, the authorities removed two zeros. Each 100 SYP note of the old currency now corresponds to one SYP note. The old notes are to be exchanged for the new ones within a 90-day transition period. Bank accounts are to be automatically adjusted at the beginning of the year. The amount of Syrian pounds in circulation on the market is not to be affected by the reform.

Unlike the old notes, the new notes no longer feature personalities. Instead, the images of former presidents Hafez and Bashar al-Assad have now been replaced by pictures of animals and agricultural products.³⁷

IS: More than two dozen dead in military operations

According to US information from December 30, 2025, a total of 25 IS members were killed or captured in military operations following the killing of two US soldiers and a US civilian (see BN of December 22, 2025). The US military reportedly bombed around 70 targets attributed to IS in central Syria. Among those killed were high-ranking IS members as well as foot soldiers. On January 3, 2026, and January 10, 2026, further bombings of targets associated with IS followed by the British, French, and US military.

In an attempt to attack a Christian neighborhood in Aleppo's Bab al-Faraj district on New Year's Eve, a suicide bomber killed a member of the Internal Security Forces who had stopped him. Two other security forces were wounded.³⁸

Damascus: Three rockets hit the Mezzeh district

According to media reports, three rockets hit the Mezzeh district of the capital on January 3, damaging a mosque, among other things. Another rocket landed near the local military airport.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the rockets struck an area where many high-ranking officials of the new government live. It was initially unclear who fired the rockets from a mobile launch pad.³⁹

Türkiye

Judicial reform package, early prison releases

According to media reports, following the adoption of the (eleventh since 2019) judicial reform package on December 24, 2025, approximately 50,000 offenders convicted before July 31, 2023, were released from prison early. Those convicted of terrorism, sexual offenses, crimes against women and children, organized crime, or murder are excluded from early release.

According to media reports, approximately 115,000 additional prisoners could benefit from the new regulations in the coming months.⁴⁰

Firefight with several deaths in Yalova; arrests of hundreds of suspected IS supporters

On December 29, 2025, according to media reports, three police officers and six suspected IS fighters were killed in Yalova (city) during a firefight lasting several hours with members and sympathizers of ISPK, the Afghan branch of IS (Khorasan Province).

In the days that followed, raids were reportedly carried out nationwide against suspected members of the organization. Even before the firefight in Yalova, 115 suspected IS fighters had been arrested nationwide in connection with plans to carry out attacks on New Year's Eve. According to the Turkish Interior Ministry, another 357 people were arrested after the firefight in Yalova.⁴¹

Journalist Altaylı released from custody

On December 29, 2025, prominent journalist Fatih Altaylı was released from custody after 190 days at the request of his defense attorney. In its ruling, the Istanbul Regional Court stated that there was no risk of flight and no further penalties against the defendant, but that a final decision in the appeal proceedings had not yet been made. Altaylı was sentenced to four years and two months in prison by the 2nd Criminal Chamber of the Istanbul Regional Court on November 26, 2025, for threatening the president (see BN dated December 1, 2025).⁴²

Arrests during protests against the Syrian central government's military operation in Aleppo

Following fighting in Aleppo between the central government in Damascus and the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), protests were held by pro-Kurdish HDP MPs in front of the parliament in Ankara and large demonstrations took place in predominantly Kurdish cities in the southeast of the country.

According to media reports, 25 arrests were made at a rally in Istanbul. The protesters criticized the military offensive by the government in Damascus. The two co-chairs of the HDP sharply criticized the Syrian government and the Turkish foreign minister at a press conference in Ankara on January 11, 2025. The former pursued a policy of expulsion, while the latter was complicit through his silence on current events and previous threats against the SDF.⁴³

Tunisia

Aid organization employees sentenced to two years' probation

On January 5, 2026, according to media reports, a court in Tunis sentenced Sherifa Riahi, the former director of the Tunisian branch of the French aid organization Terre d'Asile, and several of her employees to two-year suspended sentences. The reason for this was their aiding and abetting the "illegal entry and residence" of migrants. The convicted individuals, who were released following the verdict, had been arrested in May 2024 along with 17 employees of the Sousse city administration, as the latter had provided premises to the organization (see BN of December 22, 2025).⁴⁴

Ukraine

Efforts to achieve a ceasefire

According to media reports on December 25, 2025, President Zelensky agreed to withdraw his troops from Donbas to end the war, provided that the Russian Federation (RF) also withdraws and the area becomes a demilitarized zone under international supervision. According to media reports on December 28, 2025, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) analyzed that the RF is demanding territorial concessions for peace because it does not have "sufficient personnel and material" to take the rest of the Donetsk region and continue the war in other parts of Ukraine at the same time. After the meeting between Presidents Zelensky and Trump on December 28, 2025, in Florida, Trump stated, without giving details, that an agreement on security guarantees for Ukraine was much closer and that he expected Europe, with US support, to take on a large part of these efforts. According to Zelensky, the US had offered Ukraine 15-year security guarantees. However, he wanted a much longer term.

According to media reports, at a summit meeting of the "coalition of the willing" with President Zelensky and US envoys Witkoff and Kushner on January 6, 2026, in Paris, security guarantees for Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire with the Russian Federation were specified in a memorandum of understanding. According to the reports, the guarantees—which include a European multinational force to be deployed in the event of a ceasefire—also include

binding commitments to support the country in the event of a renewed Russian attack. France and the UK have declared their willingness to send troops to Ukraine following a peace agreement. The allies would participate in a proposed US-led mechanism to monitor and verify the ceasefire. This would likely involve the use of drones, sensors, and satellites, but not US troops. According to Zelensky, it still needs to be clarified how the monitoring would work and how the Ukrainian army would be supported and financed. He also said he had not received a clear answer from European allies on how they would defend Ukraine in the event of a renewed Russian attack after a peace agreement. Talks on unresolved issues such as territorial concessions and control of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant would continue. The RF had not given any public signal that it would accept a peace agreement with the security guarantees demanded by Ukraine's allies and had previously rejected a NATO troop presence in Ukraine. In response, reports indicate that a Russian air strike on the night of January 9, 2026, on a gas storage facility near Lviv, close to the EU and NATO border, saw the second use of an Oreschnik hypersonic missile capable of carrying nuclear weapons.⁴⁵

Civilian casualties

According to media reports, Russian attacks between December 23, 2025, and January 11, 2026, claimed several civilian lives in the following Ukrainian regions: December 23, 2025 (Zhytomyr and Donetsk: 1 each), December 24, 2025 (Kharkiv: 1), December 25, 2025 (Kherson and Chernihiv: 1 each), December 26, 2025 (Kharkiv: 2), December 27, 2025 (Kyiv region and Kyiv city: 1 each), December 28, 2025 (Donetsk: 1), 29.12.25 (Donetsk: 1, Kherson: 2), 30.12.25 (Donetsk: 3), 31.12.25 (Kherson: 1), 01.01.26 (Donetsk and Kherson: 1 each), 02.01.26 (Donetsk and Kherson: 2 each, Kharkiv: 4), 03.01.26 (Donetsk: 2), 04.01.26 (Sumy: 1), 05.01.26 (Kyiv and Kherson regions: 1 each), 07.01.26 (Odessa: 1), 08.01.26 (Kherson: 3), 09.01.26 (Kyiv: 4, Donetsk: 1), 10.01.26 (Donetsk: 3).

According to reports, the RF accuses Ukraine of killing 28 people celebrating New Year's Eve in a drone attack on a hotel and café in the coastal town of Chorly in the Russian-controlled part of the Kherson region on the morning of 01.01.26. Ukraine, on the other hand, said it was a military event. There are no independent reports or confirmation of the death toll.⁴⁶

War

According to media reports on December 24, 2025, Ukraine has withdrawn its troops from the embattled city of Sieversk. Sieversk is located on the route to the last two major cities in the Donetsk region still held by Ukraine, Kramatorsk and Sloviansk. According to reports, on January 2, 2026, Ukrainian authorities ordered the evacuation of over 3,000 families from 44 frontline towns in the Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk regions, where Russian troops are advancing. According to these reports, over 150,000 people have been evacuated from frontline areas since June 1, 2025. According to an AFP analysis of ISW data, the RF has captured over 5,600 km², or nearly 1% of Ukrainian territory, in 2025, according to media reports on January 3, 2026. Although the area conquered is larger than in the previous two years combined, it is far below the more than 60,000 km² that the RF captured in 2022. In contrast, the Ukrainian open-source mapping project DeepState stated in its assessment, according to reports dated January 2, 2026, that the RF had only occupied 4,336 km² of Ukrainian territory in 2025, which represents 0.72% of the country.⁴⁷

Energy infrastructure

According to reports, a massive Russian drone and missile attack cut off power supplies two days before Christmas and at the start of a cold spell in the Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Kharkiv, and Chernihiv regions. As a result of Russian air strikes on the night of December 28, 2025, one-third of the capital Kyiv was left without heating and electricity, according to reports. According to media reports on January 1, 2026, the energy supplier DTEK reported significant damage to two power plants as a result of a Russian drone attack on Odessa. According to media reports, Russian air strikes on January 5, 2026, caused power outages in the Kyiv region, prompting the activation of emergency power systems for water and heating supplies. On the same day, the energy infrastructure in Kharkiv, Slavutych (Kyiv region) and in the Donetsk and Chernihiv regions was also damaged. In most regions, the electricity grid operator Ukrenergo introduced hourly power cut schedules for household customers and restrictions on electricity consumption for industry. According to further reports, Russian air strikes on January 7, 2026, almost completely cut off the power supply in the Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk regions. In the Zaporizhzhia region, the power supply was restored on January 8, 2026. According to reports, Russian air strikes on the night of January 9, 2026, caused heating and water supply failures in half of the residential buildings in Kyiv, at least until the

weekend. The mayor called on the population to temporarily leave the capital if they could find a warm place elsewhere. The power supply in Kyiv is strained because the grid is severely damaged and people are using more electric heaters due to the cold weather. Following further Russian air strikes on energy facilities, media reports on January 10, 2026, indicated that 50,000 households in Dnipro and, on January 11, 2026, 300,000 households in the western Ukrainian region of Rivne were temporarily without power.⁴⁸

Venezuela /USA

Maduro and Flores captured in Caracas by US military operation and brought to trial in the US

As part of a military operation that included attacks on various targets in the country, US special forces captured Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores in Caracas on January 3, 2026, and flew them to New York City. On the same day, US Attorney General Pam Bondi announced that they had been charged and would have to stand trial on charges including "conspiracy to commit drug terrorism." The indictment also accuses Maduro of collaborating with criminal groups such as "Tren de Aragua" and the FARC. According to further reports, Maduro and Flores appeared in court in New York City for the first time on January 5, 2026, and pleaded not guilty to all charges. Maduro added that he had been kidnapped and was still the president of his country.

While US media estimate the number of people killed in the operation at between 67 and 80, Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello announced on January 7, 2026, that 100 people had been killed. According to Cuban government figures, 32 Cuban military personnel who were operating in the country are among the dead. According to media reports, the operation was preceded by an increase in US military presence in the waters off the Venezuelan coast and attacks on boats suspected of transporting drugs in the Caribbean and the eastern Pacific, with at least 115 fatalities to date (see BN of November 17, October 27, Oct. 20, Oct. 13, Oct. 6, Sept. 8, and Aug. 25).⁴⁹

Rodríguez sworn in as interim president; security situation

After US President Donald Trump spoke out against opposition politician María Corina Machado as Maduro's successor, the former vice president Delcy Rodríguez was sworn in as interim president on January 5, 2026. According to reports, she called for the release of both prisoners before her swearing-in and described Maduro as the country's legitimate president, but shortly afterwards announced an "agenda of cooperation" with the US. Meanwhile, on January 7, 2026, Trump made it clear that he expected the US to lead the country for years to come and control oil production. On January 9, 2026, Rodríguez also stated that the possibility of resuming diplomatic relations with the US was being examined.

Rodríguez's takeover of power is unanimously assessed in media reports as a continuation of the previous power structures, as Interior Minister Cabello and Defense Minister Padrino, among others, remain in office. This assessment is based in particular on a 90-day state of emergency that came into force on January 3, 2026, giving the security forces far-reaching powers. This has intensified repression in the country and increased the presence of pro-government paramilitary units ("colectivos") in the streets. This is also one of the reasons why there have been no public demonstrations by Maduro's opponents since the military intervention. The gradual release of (prominent) political prisoners, announced on January 8, 2026, and carried out on an unknown scale, was said to have been made under pressure from Washington. NGOs described this measure as insufficient and demanded the release of all political prisoners in the country. Meanwhile, it is reported that on January 10, 2026, a police officer imprisoned for political reasons died after being arrested on December 9, 2025, for allegedly engaging in activities critical of the government.⁵⁰

Yemen

Offensive against the Southern Transitional Council

On December 26, 2025, several airstrikes took place in the Hadramawt governorate. The secessionist Southern Transitional Council (STC) blamed Saudi Arabia for this. The airstrikes were preceded by a warning from the Saudi government that the STC should immediately withdraw from the areas in Hadramawt and al-Mahra that it had only captured in December 2025 (see BN of December 22, 2025). There are no reports of deaths or injuries.

On 30.12.25, the Saudi government announced that it had carried out air strikes on the port city of al-Mukalla (Hadramawt Governorate), destroying weapons deliveries from the UAE to its ally, the STC. Just a few hours later, the UAE announced the immediate withdrawal of its troops from Yemen. According to the UAE, this was already completed on 02.01.26.

Meanwhile, on January 2, 2026, the STC announced a constitution for an independent South Yemen. On the same day, the Saudi-led coalition supporting Yemen's internationally recognized government (iaR) launched an offensive against the STC, which included Saudi airstrikes in Hadramawt Governorate. Further air strikes followed on January 3, 2026, in al-Mukalla and other locations in the Hadramawt governorate. According to the STC, 80 of its fighters were killed and over 150 wounded. The pro-government forces reported 14 dead and 30 wounded. There are no reports of civilian casualties. According to government representatives from Yemen and Saudi Arabia, the governorates of al-Mahra and Hadramawt have been back under the official control of the Saudi-backed iaR since January 4, 2026.

The Yemeni government, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the STC are actually part of the anti-Houthi coalition, but primarily pursue their own interests. Relations between Saudi Arabia and the UAE had deteriorated due to the UAE's continued support for the STC, especially since the latter conquered larger areas in December 2025.⁵¹

Further developments of the STC

According to Saudi Arabia, Aidarous al-Zubaidi, leader of the STC and also a member of the Yemeni Presidential Council, did not attend a meeting in Riyadh on January 7, 2026, between the groups involved in Yemen, but instead left Yemen with the help of the UAE. According to Saudi Arabia, al-Zubaidi was taken by speedboat to Somaliland with the support of the UAE, from where he first flew to Mogadishu and then to Abu Dhabi (UAE). The Yemeni government subsequently expelled al-Zubaidi from the Presidential Council and accused him of treason. After al-Zubaidi failed to appear in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia carried out airstrikes on January 7, 2026, in the governorate of al-Dhale, al-Zubaidi's home governorate. According to Saudi sources, al-Zubaidi had previously mobilized a large number of troops there. According to the STC, four people were killed in the airstrikes.

On January 7, 2026, Yemeni militias supported by Saudi Arabia gained control of the city of Aden, which had been under STC control since 2018, following a ground offensive. According to media reports, several people were killed in the process.

On January 9, 2026, several STC leaders announced the dissolution of the STC from Riyadh. A counterstatement from parts of the STC remaining in Yemen was published on January 10, 2026, which described the dissolution as false and accused Saudi Arabia of forcing such statements on STC members.⁵²

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