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Directorate 22 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

15 June 2015

Afghanistan

Taliban attack in the province of Helmand

According to official statements, at least 17 police officers were killed in a Taliban attack in the district of Musa Qala in the province of Helmand on 13 June 2015. A Taliban spokesman told AFP that 25 police officers were killed.

Pakistan

Christian prisoner executed

On 10 June 2015, Aftab Bahadur Masih, a Christian, was executed despite massive doubts about his guilt. He was convicted of a double murder which he allegedly committed in 1992 at age 15. Masih was held in the Kot Lakhpat jail in Lahore for almost 23 years.

Attacks on extremists

On 13 June 2015, Pakistani air strikes in the framework of the military operation Zarb-e Azb (“sharp and cutting strike”) killed at least 20 extremists in the Datta Khel tribal area in northern Waziristan. According to media reports, between 2,000 and 2,700 extremists were killed in 2014. The military operation Zarb-e Azb was launched about one year ago and aims to drive out all extremists from Northern Waziristan by July 2015.

Iraq

Mosul

Witnesses claim that IS has executed 944 people, among them 98 women, during its one-year reign in Mosul. They were sentenced to death by IS sharia courts.

Terrorist attacks

On 13 June 2015, at least eleven people were killed and at least 27 injured in a series of suicide bombings on the road between Tikrit and Baiji in the province of Salahaddin. Reportedly, army members and Shia fighters were among the victims. Shia militia and the Iraqi army are jointly fighting against IS in the region. For months now, IS and government troops have been fighting for Baiji. IS took responsibility for the suicide bombings.

On 14 June, a car bomb killed at least ten people and injured at least 20 near a market in Baghdad. So far, nobody has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Syria/Turkey

Battle for Tal Abyad/civilians fleeing

Kurdish units and IS are currently fighting for control over the city of Tal Abyad. According to the authorities, the fights have caused more than 13,000 Syrians to flee to Turkey in the last few days. On 13 and 14 June 2015, Turkish security officials initially used violence to drive back thousands of Syrian refugees at a border checkpoint. However, late on 14 June 2015 the first refugees were allowed to cross the border. Turkey had announced on 11 June 2015 that it would take measures to limit the influx of Syrian refugees, saying that the country had already taken in about 1.8 million refugees since the beginning of the fights more than four years ago.

Syria

Druze villagers killed

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that al-Nusra Front fighters killed at least 20 Druze villagers (the Druze are a religious minority) in the north-western province of Idlib on 11 June 2015.

Military air base seized by rebels

Essam al-Rayes, a spokesman for a rebel alliance, claimed that the rebels seized the military air base at al-Thala in the province of Sweida in the south of the country on 11 June 2015. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed that parts of the air base were taken, whereas state television refuted the rebels' claims.

Yemen

Provincial capital taken

Shortly before the beginning of the peace talks in Geneva on 15 June 2015, Houthi rebels took the desert city of al-Hasm on 14 June 2015. Al-Hasm is situated near the border to Saudi-Arabia and is the capital of the large al-Jawf province.

Israel/Palestinian autonomous areas

Israeli soldiers punished for violence against Palestinians

The Israeli army has punished four soldiers for violence against a Palestinian in the West Bank on 12 June 2015. The army radio station and other sources reported on 14 June 2015 that the commander of the unit was reprimanded. One soldier was sentenced to 30 days' detention on the army base and two to 28 days of prison on probation each.

Egypt

Attack on temple in Luxor

On 10 June 2015, a suicide bomber blew himself up in front of the Karnak temple (a UNESCO World Heritage site near the city of Luxor). Security officials reported that four Egyptians were injured. Two attackers were subsequently killed in a gunfire fight between other assailants and security officials. So far, no-one has taken responsibility for the attack. The government announced that security measures will immediately be stepped up at all historical sites.

Libya

Negotiations in Berlin

On 10 June 2015, the German foreign minister hosted talks of representatives of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the EU, Germany, Italy, Spain, UN special envoy Bernardino Leon and 25 representatives of rivaling Libyan groups. So far, no side has rejected Leon's peace plan. While all participants

want to continue the talks, it seems improbable that an agreement will be reached until Ramadan (17/18 June).

US air strike targets islamist leader

The internationally recognised Libyan government in Tobruk announced on 14 June 2015 that Algerian islamist leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar and other members of a terrorist organisation were killed in a US air strike in the night between 13 and 14 June 2015. A Pentagon spokesman confirmed that US war planes had attacked Belmokhtar in the city of Ajdabiya in eastern Libya. The air raid took place after consultation with the Libyan government. So far, the US have not confirmed Belmokhtar's death.

Mali

Attack on police station in the south

On 10 June 2015, about 30 militants attacked a police station in Misséni on the southern Malian border to Côte d'Ivoire (region of Seikasso). A policeman was killed. The attackers carried black flags and cried "Al-lahu Akbar". So far, attacks of islamist extremists have mainly taken place in the north-eastern desert regions.

Eritrea

UN speak of crimes against humanity

The UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea has accused the regime of president Isaias Afewerki of arbitrary executions and systematic torture. Forced labour, indefinite conscription and arbitrary arrests are an everyday occurrence. The UN Commission concludes that the regime uses a huge security apparatus and domestic surveillance network in order to keep the people in constant fear. According to the report, which was published on 8 June 2015, the massive human rights violations may constitute crimes against humanity. A government representative rejected the UN report and said that it was a lie that Eritrea pursued a "shoot-to-kill" policy to prevent people from leaving the country. According to the UN, Eritreans are currently the biggest group of refugees in Europe (about 357,400 refugees).

Burundi

UN warn of civil war

Increasing violence has led to concerns about a new civil war. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein reported on 9 June 2015 that the Imbonerakure militia, the official youth wing of the governing party CNDD-FDD, is involved in executions, kidnappings and torture.

Opposition rejects electoral commission

An end to the political crisis is not in sight. The opposition rejected the electoral commission's proposal to postpone the parliamentary elections to 26 June 2015 and the presidential elections to 15 July 2015 because it was not involved in the decision. It has called for the establishment of a new commission, the disarmament of Imbonerakure and for president Nkurunziza's giving up his ambitions to run again. Nkurunziza's desire to run for a third term in office was what triggered conflicts, in which up to 21 people have lost their lives. His opponents believe that his renewed candidacy violates the constitution and the peace agreement of 2006.

Special envoy steps down

Algerian Said Djinnit, the UN special envoy to Burundi, stepped down on 11 June 2015 as the opposition in particular had criticised his activities as a mediator and voiced doubts about his impartiality.

Somalia

Large-scale attack against al-Shabaab

Somalian security officials conducted raids in Mogadishu and arrested at least 60 suspected al-Shabaab members. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were seized. Security officials explained on 15 June 2015 that secret service employees had been going from door to door for days to detect suspects. The operation focused on quarters in the south and north of the capital. The authorities hope to foil further suicide attacks by this operation.

Kenya

Al-Shabaab militia attack army camp; several casualties

At least eleven extremists and two soldiers were killed in heavy fights between Somalian islamists and Kenyan soldiers in the north-east of Kenya. A spokesman for the army announced that al-Shabaab fighters attacked an army camp on the island of Lamu near the coast on 14 June 2015. An al-Shabaab spokesman confirmed the attack, but denied that al-Shabaab had suffered losses.

Al-Shabaab has repeatedly chosen targets in Kenya. For example, in April the islamists killed 152 people in an attack on the university of Garissa. Only a few days ago the terrorist militia had threatened to carry out new, bloody attacks. The group demands that Kenyan troops withdraw from Somalia.

DR of the Congo

UN supports army in its fight against FRPI rebels

On 10 June 2015, the leader of the UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO, which is based in the DR of the Congo, confirmed that ground forces, armed helicopters and UAVs had been shifted to the district of Ituri (north-eastern province of Orientale) in order to support the Congolese army in its fight against the "Ituri Patriotic Resistance Force" (FRPI) militia. The army and the blue helmets have been jointly fighting FRPI since 3 June 2015 after disarmament negotiations had failed and about 400 FPRI fighters had started to march from the city of Aveba towards the neighbouring city of Gety. At least 34 rebels were killed in the fights. FPRI deploys numerous child soldiers. It is charged with serious human rights violations and of illegal trade with natural resources and wood.

Nigeria

New regional intervention force against Boko Haram

At a summit of the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon) and Benin, the delegates decided on 11 June 2015 in Abuja, the Nigerian capital, that Nigeria will have the command of a newly established, joint multi-national intervention force (MNJTF) to fight Boko Haram. For the first year, the force will be based in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, and consist of 8,700 soldiers, policemen and civil servants. The MNJTF will replace the current alliance between Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon, which has been fighting Boko Haram since February 2015.

Boko Haram attacks three villages

On 9 June 2015 at about 4:00 p.m. Boko Haram fighters left the Sambisa forest and attacked the villages Matangale, Buraltima and Dirmanti in the federal state of Borno (Damboa Local Government Area). They killed at least 43 inhabitants, pillaged food and burned down all buildings.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

No progress towards a solution of the political crisis

EU enlargement commissioner Johannes Hahn hosted talks to resolve the political crisis in Brussels on 10 June 2015, but no agreement was reached. Prime minister Gruevski, main opposition leader Zaev and the leaders of two parties which represent the Albanian minority participated in the talks, which were aimed at

hammering out the details of the early elections that – according to the results of the talks on 10 June – will be held in April 2016 and at agreeing on reforms.

Thousands of Albanians demonstrate in Skopje

On 13 June 2015, several thousands of Albanians peacefully demonstrated against the government in Skopje, the capital. They demanded that the government coalition led by prime minister Gruevski step down, even though the biggest Albanian party DUI (Democratic Union for Integration) and its leader Ali Ahmeti belongs to the coalition as a junior partner. The protesters accused Gruevski of treating the Albanian people as second-class citizens and called for a better treatment of the Albanian language. The demonstration had been organised by Besa, a protest movement of the Albanian minority. About one-third of Macedonia's roughly two million inhabitants are Albanians.

Ukraine

Situation in the east of the country

Once again, violence has erupted in eastern Ukraine. According to reports, the train station of Donetsk was under fire on 9 June 2015. Pro-Russian separatists accused the Ukrainian army of having attacked residential areas in Donetsk. A separatist fighter was reportedly killed in the area of Luhansk. In eastern Ukraine seven government soldiers were killed when their car drove over a mine. Military commanders in Kiev said on 13 June 2015 that at least six soldiers had been killed. The pro-Russian separatists recently accused the army of having violated the ceasefire, which was agreed four months ago, at about 100 occasions.

Nepal

Resolution after years of constitutional crisis

After years of negotiations the government and the Maoist opposition have agreed on the basic outline of a new constitution. The current political system, which provides for parliamentary representation, an executive prime minister and a ceremonial president, will remain in place, and the electoral system will consist of a mix of proportional and direct representation. Nepal will be divided into eight federal states in the future (so far: five development regions). However, their borders are still unclear and will be decided by a commission. The new constitution is regarded as the last step in the peace process, which started when the Maoists laid down their arms in 2006 after having fought violently for the abolition of the monarchy for ten years. The civil war cost more than 16,000 people their lives.

India/Myanmar

Indian army kills rebels in Myanmar

Only a few days after a rebel attack on the Indian army, soldiers crossed the border to Myanmar and destroyed rebel camps. An army spokesman said on 11 June 2015 that there had been numerous casualties, but did not provide any more details. Indian media reported that between 20 and 100 rebels had been killed. Only a few days before the insurgents had ambushed an army convoy in the north-eastern state of Manipur and shot 18 soldiers. While the Myanmar army did not participate in the operation, it would have cooperated if necessary. Myanmar has allowed the Indian army to enter its territory for the fight against separatists since 2010.

Sri Lanka

Government has started talks with Tamil exile organisations

Sri Lankan foreign minister Mangala Samaraweera talked to Tamil organisations in London about the situation of Tamils in the north of the country and the situation of those who had been driven from their homes during the civil war. Some of the refugees still cannot return to their villages, as the army is keeping some areas occupied. The talks also served to recreate trust between Sinhalese and Tamils. For example, the gov-

ernment of president Maithripala Sirisena, which was elected in January 2015, promised to review a list dating from 2014 which classifies more than 400 persons and 15 Tamil organisations as terrorist.