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Group 22 – Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

10 November 2014

Afghanistan

Security situation

On 03.11.14, anti-Taliban leaders in Maqur district (south-eastern Ghazni province) urged the government to give them more support or to absorb them into the police service. Clashes between security forces and Taliban insurgents in southern Helmand and eastern Nangarhar provinces killed three Taliban fighters and wounded another eight. In Gardez, capital of south-eastern Paktia province, four people were killed and 23 injured when a bomb exploded on a market place. In a military operation in north-eastern Badakhshan province, a Taliban district leader and seven fighters lost their lives. Another operation in northern Faryab province left five insurgents dead.

On 05.11.14, the interior ministry stated that at least 28 Taliban combatants were killed and 47 more wounded in operations of the security forces mounted in southern Uruzgan and south-eastern Khost provinces. Also, missions against the Taliban were carried out in Laghman, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Badakhshan, Balkh, Kandahar, Zabul and Paktia provinces, the ministry said.

On 06.11.14, the bodies of 10 individuals who had been shot dead were found in southern Paktia province. According to the authorities, the victims were civilians. The Taliban, in turn, are claiming that they were members of the security forces.

On 09.11.14, Taliban fighters carried out an attack on the police headquarters in Kabul, killing at least one person. Apparently, the police chief himself remained unhurt in the attack.

On 10.11.14, several bomb attacks launched in three cities killed at least 10 police officers. The areas affected were Kabul as well as Logar and Nangarhar provinces.

Pakistan

Security situation

On 04.11.14, two soldiers and two civilians were killed in a bomb attack in Painsa Cheena village (Khyber tribal district).

Christian couple lynched by mob

On 04.11.14, a Christian couple was burnt alive by a mob near Lahore/Punjab; they were accused of having desecrated a copy of the Koran. The Punjab authorities set up a committee to speed up investigations. Also, security was enhanced in Christian neighbourhoods. In the past, only few cases of religious violence against minorities have resulted in prosecutions.

Suicide bombing claims 60 lives

After the most severe attack near the Pakistani-Indian border in months, the number of casualties has risen to 60. In the night of 10.11.14, twelve people died of their injuries, a senior doctor of Ghurki hospital said. More than 130 people were reported to have been injured. The attack had been launched at Wagah crossing, where large crowds are gathering every day to watch an elaborate flag-lowering as the border closes. Police said that the suicide bomber was a young man. Meanwhile, Sunni Muslim Jamaat ul-Ahrar, a Pakistani Taliban group with links to al-Qaeda, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Iraq

Airstrikes launched on IS leaders

On 09.11.14, the US confirmed a series of airstrikes targeting a suspected high-rank IS gathering in the north of Mosul (Nineveh province). According to the US, there is no information available yet on whether IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was wounded and whether he was present at all in the convoy. Iraqi sources, however, say that al-Baghdadi has indeed been injured. According to a press release, the airstrikes launched in the past weeks have limited the jihadists' freedom to manoeuvre, communicate and command.

Deployment of trainers and advisers

In the coming weeks, the US will send 1,500 more trainers and advisers to Iraq. This would bring the total US forces in Iraq to about 3,100. The soldiers will not be conducting combat operations, it was stated.

Yemen

Fierce clashes in Sanaa and southern Yemen

For the first time since mid-September, fierce fighting has erupted in the capital of Sanaa which is controlled by Shia Muslim al-Houthi rebels. As was reported by Yemeni news site Al-Masdar Online, armed men attacked al-Houthi posts near the airport in the night of 06.11.14, whereupon the defenders set up barriers around the airport.

As was also reported by Al-Masdar Online, new violence has also erupted in the southern parts of the country where al-Houthi rebels have been fighting against Sunni Muslim tribes for about three weeks.

Syria

Army continues attacks with barrel bombs

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that in the evening of 08.11.14, at least 21 people were killed and up to 100 others injured after an attack by the Syrian army with barrel bombs (oil barrels filled with explosives) in al-Bab region (north of Aleppo), where insurgents are attacked by both government troops and IS fighters.

Khorasan group targeted by US airstrike

In the night of 06.11.14, the US military mounted an attack on members of the Khorasan group for the second time. Apparently, this is a network of long-standing al-Qaeda terrorists suspected of having planned attacks on the US and Europe. The strike was launched near the town of Sarmada in Idlib province. Already at the end of September, the US had destroyed a building of the Khorasan group, killing several of their leaders. Until then, this group had been largely unknown.

Rebels and al-Nusra Front capture key town of Nawa

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that on 09.11.14, Syrian rebels and al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front fighters seized the southern town of Nawa in Dara'a province from troops loyal to the government.

Lebanon

Parliamentary term extended until 2017

On 05.11.14, Lebanese lawmakers extended their mandate until June 2017 with an overwhelming vote (95 out of 97). The voting session was boycotted by the two Christian parties Kataib and Free Patriotic Movement (FPM). The last parliamentary elections had been held in 2009 for a four-year term, but the elections scheduled for 2013 were cancelled due to the precarious security situation. Neither was it possible to hold elections now, it was argued. Only the President would be able to annul the decision. However,

Lebanon has been without a head of state since May 2014, because parliament has not managed to agree on a successor. The 15th session to elect a new president has been scheduled for 19.11.14.

Palestinian Autonomous Areas/Israel

Israeli ex-generals and police chiefs call for a revival of the roadmap for peace

In an open letter, 105 former generals, police and security officials have urged the government to provide a fresh impetus to solve the Middle East conflict. The Israeli news portal Ynet reported on 03.11.14 that the undersigned called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to start a 'diplomatic initiative' for a lasting two-state solution. Israel was 'strong enough' to go down this route 'without risks to its security', the report went on. The undersigned were 'tired of a reality of rounds of fighting every few years' instead of a 'genuine effort to adopt the Saudi initiative'. In 2002, Saudi Arabia had offered a peace plan for Israel and its Arab neighbours in exchange for Israel's complete withdrawal from Arab lands captured since 1967. Israel-Palestinian negotiations brokered by US Secretary of State John Kerry came to a halt in April 2014.

New clashes on Temple Mount and in Jerusalem's Old City

For weeks, violent clashes have been occurring on Temple Mount between Palestinians and Israeli police forces. Last week, the area was closed for the first time in years, after a Jewish nationalist was shot at and the suspected Palestinian perpetrator was killed by police officers. The unrest has prompted fears of a Third Intifada. On 05.11.14, violent eruptions continued. A police spokesperson stated that the security forces were attacked with stones and fire crackers and then entered the compound of the al-Aqsa Mosque in order to push masked rioters back. After the incident, violence erupted also in Jerusalem's Old City, a reporter was cited, saying that police officers fired tear gas and stun grenades into an angry crowd near one of the gates to the Temple Mount. Apparently, there were many school children among the bystanders.

Protests and strikes after killing of young Arab

On 08.11.14, the killing of a 22-year old Arab by the police in the town of Kafr Kana near Nazareth caused severe unrest and strikes. Dozens of young Arabs threw stones at the security forces who defended themselves with water cannons. Police said that the suspect had attacked a police officer with a knife. The victim's father, however, spoke of 'cold-blooded murder'. Apart from Kafr Kana, people took to the streets in protest against the killing of the young man also in Nazareth, Oum al-Fahm, Haifa and Beersheba. Clashes were also reported from Shuafat refugee camp in east Jerusalem for the fifth consecutive day. In protest of the deadly shooting, many shops and schools remained closed in numerous towns.

Turkey

Asylum seeker boat capsized

On 03.11.14, at least 24 people, among them many children, died when a boat carrying asylum seekers sank at the mouth of Istanbul's Bosphorus strait. Seven people could be saved, the media reported. Apparently, most of the refugees came from Afghanistan and Syria.

Libya

New clashes in Benghazi kill 40

The Libyan army and Islamic militias are still fighting for the control of the port of Benghazi city. Since July, troops of ex-general Chalifa Haftar have been trying to recapture the port with the support of the regular army. On 03.11.14, they mounted a new major offensive in the area. Within the first four days, more than 40 people, both fighters and civilians, have been killed, military and rescue staff said. So far, the fighting has claimed around 300 lives on both sides.

Human rights violations

In a report released on 30.10.14, Amnesty International accuses rival militias and armed groups of grave human rights violations and war crimes. Abductions, torture, pillaging and executions were the order of the

day, the report said. The briefing was based on 53 interviews conducted with victims of human rights violations and on the analysis of satellite images documenting attacks on civilian objects and medical facilities. Amnesty International calls on the militia leaders to bring any violation of the international law to an end and to release people kidnapped and detained for their ethnicity or political affiliation. In addition, Amnesty Libya Researcher Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui has called upon the International Criminal Court to take action in Libya in order to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity and to bring to justice the perpetrators.

Supreme Court rules parliament unconstitutional

On 06.11.14, Libya's Supreme Court invalidated the nation's internationally recognized parliament, elected at the end of June 2014 and presently located in Tobruk. An Islamist member of parliament had appealed before the court because the new parliament is based in the remote city of Tobruk instead of Tripoli or Benghazi, as stipulated by the constitution. The judges not only criticized the seat of the parliament, but declared the entire electoral process illegal. The parliament, in turn, dismissed the court's ruling, saying that lawmakers would continue their work. According to Libyan news site al-Wasat, the court had taken the decision under the barrels of guns and weapons. Observers say that the decision aims at reinstating the previous parliament, the General National Congress (GNC) which is dominated by Islamists. The GNC's mandate had expired after the elections in June. It does not recognize the elected government and has formed a counter-parliament with seat in Tripoli; however, the GNC is not recognised by the international community.

Nigeria

Bomb blast on Ashura procession in Potiskum kills dozens

On 03.11.14, a suicide bomber detonated a device in the city of Potiskum (north-eastern Yobe State) during the Ashura procession organised by the Shia Muslim sect 'Islamic Movement in Nigeria' (IMN). Immediately after the explosion, soldiers started shooting, but it is unclear yet whether anyone was hit by the gunfire. The bomb blast killed approx. 30 people, among them many children, and injured another 80. Press reports say that the Islamist Boko Haram terror group is responsible for the attack, because they do not recognise Shias as true Muslims and also because Yobe State is one of their strongholds. However, top IMN cleric Sheikh Ibraheem el-Zakzaky has blamed soldiers for both the bomb attack and for the shooting.

Extrajudicial killing of suspected Boko Haram members in detention

On 05.11.14, soldiers brought the bodies of 18 young men to the morgue of the general hospital in the city of Potiskum. All the bodies had gunshot wounds, a member of the hospital staff said. Local residents made accusations that the military had arrested the men in the morning of that day in their homes in Mosco Line district for allegedly being members of Boko Haram, and that they shot them shortly thereafter.

Attacks launched by Boko Haram

In the afternoon of 05.11.14, Islamist Boko Haram fighters attacked the town of Malam Fatori (Abadam Local Government Area, Borno State, near the border to the Federal Republic of Niger) and succeeded in taking control of the town after violent fighting with the Nigerian military. Apparently, at least 16 civilians and dozens of insurgents were killed in the clashes; 315 Nigerian soldiers fled over the border to Diffa town. On 7.11.14, a suicide attacker killed at least seven people in the city of Azare (Katagum LGA, Bauchi State) as they queued to withdraw money from a cash machine of the First Bank of Nigeria.

Central African Republic

Escalating violence

As was reported by Amnesty International on 06.11.14, there has been an escalating wave of sectarian attacks in the central regions of the country in recent weeks, with dozens of civilians killed and thousands more displaced in attacks by Seleka, anti-Balaka and ethnic Ful fighters. The main targets were the towns of Dekoa and Bambari (Ouaka prefecture) and several villages near Bambari, the AI report went on. Many people have taken shelter at the church of Notre Dame des Victoires in Bambari, others have walked as far as

Grimari, 80 km east of Bambari. The mostly Muslim Seleka forces, now split into at least two armed groups (one of them with many ethnic Ful adherents), were clashing with mainly anti-Balaka militia in the region, AI said. All sides were systematically targeting civilians that they believed to support the other side's fighters. The situation was extremely volatile, the report stated. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has not yet been able to stop or prevent most of these abuses, the report concluded.

Burkina Faso

Plans for a civilian-led transitional government

On 05.11.14 military, opposition and civil society groups agreed on the formation of a civilian-led transitional government to guide the country until the next parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for November 2015. No agreement could be reached on the 'eminent civilian personality' to head the future interim government. The military has taken over power after President Compaoré stepped down on 31.10.14 after 27 years in power, following protests against a new extension of his term of office.

Kenya

Moderate Muslim cleric shot dead

On 04.11.14, Sheikh Salim Bakari Mwarangi was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Mombasa's Likoni suburb. As yet, there is no information available on the background of the killing. It is presumed that the cleric's commitment against Islamic networks recruiting Kenyan youth for the al-Shabaab militia may have played a role in the incident.

Violence after fatal attack

On 08.11.14, a terror suspect was gunned down by unidentified individuals in Mombasa. On the funeral ceremony the next day, violence erupted, leaving one person dead. Also in this case, there is no information on the background of the incident.

Bosnia and Herzegovina/FYROM Macedonia/Serbia

Safe countries of origin

On 06.11.14, the „Law on the Classification of Additional States as Safe Countries of Origin and on Facilitating Access to the Labour Market for Asylum-Seekers and Tolerated Foreign Citizens“ entered into force in Germany. The new legislation adds the Balkan states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia to the safe country status within the meaning of Article 16(a)(3) sentence 1 of the German Basic Law, Section 29(a)(2) of the German Asylum Procedure Act in conjunction with Annex II to the German Asylum Procedure Act, which already applies to Ghana and Senegal.

Russian Federation

Ultra-nationalists march on Day of National Unity

On 04.11.14, thousands of ultra-nationalists took to the streets for a 'strong and Slavic Russia' in Moscow and other Russian cities. In the 'Russian March' rally staged in Russia's capital, right-wing extremists, partly masked, chanted the slogan 'Russia only for Russians'. The events on the 'Day of National Unity' were primarily focussed on the Ukraine conflict, with many participants waving the flag of eastern Ukrainian separatist region of Novorossiia. Also, the black-yellow-white 'imperial flag' was frequently to be seen. On banners, demonstrators demanded an immigration stop for 'non-Russians' from Central Asia and the Caucasus Region. Human rights activists have expressed concern that the action could aggravate the ethnic problems in multi-ethnic Russia.

Background

The 'Day of National Unity' was introduced as a public holiday by Kremlin chief Vladimir Putin in 2004. It is meant to commemorate the liberation of Moscow from Polish-Lithuanian occupation forces in the seventeenth century and to replace the communist October Revolution Anniversary celebrations.

Georgia

Government crisis

The dispute over closer ties with the European Union and NATO has led to a government crisis. The 'Georgian Dream' coalition founded two years ago has lost two important ministries. On 05.11.14, foreign minister Maia Panjikidze resigned from her post in protest against what she saw as threat to the pro-European course of the former Soviet republic. On the day of her resignation, she told journalists that the Euro-Atlantic integration was of utmost importance to her and her team. Together with Ms Panjikidze, four of her deputies also quit office.

On the previous day, defence minister Irakli Alasania had been dismissed, who also advocated a pro-Western course. He had accused the head of government Irakli Garibashvili of sabotaging the Black Sea republic's aspirations to join both the EU and NATO. His dismissal had been prompted by investigations into allegations of corruption against leading staff members of the defence ministry. Irakli Alasania criticised these proceedings as politically motivated and called them an attempt to block negotiations with NATO.

Prime Minister Garibashvili regretted the resignation of minister Panjikidze, saying that she expressed solidarity with her family, not with the state. Ms Panjikidze is the sister of Irakli Alasania's wife. The Georgian Dream coalition, founded by the billionaire businessman Bidzina Ivanishvili, has been in power since 2012.

Ukraine

Heavy fighting in Donetsk

The ceasefire in eastern Ukraine is becoming more and more fragile. The night of 09.11.14 saw the heaviest fighting between the Ukrainian army and pro-Russian separatists since the ceasefire had entered into force on 05.09.14. The city of Donetsk, which is controlled by the insurgent separatists, has apparently been hit by several artillery shells, claiming the lives of about ten people. The separatists, in turn, blamed the Ukrainian army for the targeted destruction of residential areas.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) warns of a new explosion of violence in the region. For roughly two weeks now, OSCE observers and others have noticed movements of tanks and other military equipment in eastern Ukraine. The government in Kyiv holds the Russian leadership in Moscow responsible for the supply of additional military staff, ammunition and equipment to the separatists. Officially, Moscow continues to deny these allegations.

China

Supporters of Hong Kong protests arrested

As was reported by Amnesty International on 07.11.14, a total of 93 people have been detained in mainland China for peacefully expressing support for the Hong Kong protests which started at the end of September. 76 were still remaining in detention as of 06.11.14, the organisation said.