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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Fighting, attacks, civilian victims

The fighting that began on 11 November 2020 in the southern province of Helmand is continuing, particularly in the districts of Nawa-e-Barakziay, Nad-e-Ali, Lashkargah and Nahr-e-Saraj. Some 13,970 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been registered since then (as of 5 November 2020); partner organisations of the United Nations are trying to provide relief. Several hospitals have been closed, others have reached their capacity limits. Heavy fighting has also been reported from parts of Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces. In Kandahar, 16,000 new internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been counted (as of 5 November 2020), some of them coming from Helmand and Uruzgan provinces. Several aid organisations have had to cease their activities in parts of these provinces.

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Project reports a total of 783 security incidents in 31 provinces in October 2020, which is an increase of 209 compared to September.

NATO reports that the number of civilians killed or injured increased in every quarter of the year. In the third quarter, 2,561 civilians were killed or injured, which is an increase of 43 percent compared to the previous quarter.

In an attack by ISKP fighters on the premises of Kabul University in the morning of 2 November 2020 (see BN of 2 November 2020), clashes with security forces lasted for hours, leaving at least 22 people dead and over 40 injured. Most of the victims were students. The ISKP has now stated to have targeted the new judges and prosecutors of the infidel government. Government representatives, however, also suspect the Taliban to be behind the attack, which those have denied. Only a week earlier, the ISKP attacked a school in a Shiite district of Kabul, killing at least 24 pupils (see BN of 26 October 2020).

On 7 November 2020, three civilians (a former Afghan TV presenter and two Central Bank employees) died when an explosive device attached to their car detonated in Kabul (Makrorayan-e-Char).

On 8 November 2020, two police officers and a defence ministry employee were killed in two attacks in Kabul. In Ghazni (Naw Abad) a house was hit by several mortar shells, killing at least seven civilians and injuring seven others (including nine children and four women). On the evening of 9 November 2020, a car bomb was detonated in Maiwand (Kandahar province) near the police headquarters, injuring at least 30 people, including ten civilians.

In the morning of 9 November 2020 at least two civilians were injured in the explosion of a bomb placed on a street in Kabul's Pul-e-Charkhi district.

Armenia / Azerbaijan

Battle for Nagorno-Karabakh - Azerbaijan declares important victory

After six weeks of fierce fighting, the war over Nagorno-Karabakh seems to be at a crucial point. Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has declared the capture of the strategically important city of Shushi (Azerbaijani Shusha) by his troops. The city is located on the access road to the Nagorno-Karabakh region, near the capital Stepanakert. From there, the Azerbaijani troops would be able to control most of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In recent days, fighting concentrated on the region around Shushi, after Azerbaijani troops had advanced far into Nagorno-Karabakh from the south. It is unclear whether Shushi is already completely in Azerbaijani hands. Reports from the Armenian side spoke of heavy fighting around and in the city. The capital Stepanakert has been under rocket fire for weeks. About 90,000 people out of a total population of about 150,000 are said to have fled the region to Armenia in the meantime. Due to the disruption of gas, electricity and water supplies the humanitarian situation is tense. Apparently, evacuation of the remaining inhabitants of Stepanakert began on 7 November, while it is still possible to reach Armenia by another road.

Tense situation in Armenia

The Armenian government, civil society organisations and private individuals are providing shelter and food, hygiene products, medicines and clothing to the refugees. So far, aid has also reached Armenia from European countries such as France and from diaspora Armenians living in the USA. The situation in Armenia, which has a population of around three million, is tense due to the corona pandemic and the difficult economic situation. The majority of the population still seems to support Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and radical opposition politicians have so far met with little response to their calls for the government to resign.

Belarus

Continuing protests against President Lukashenko

Last weekend, protest rallies against President Alexander Lukashenko were again held in several cities. On 8 November 2020, a total of 1,024 people were arrested, the human rights organisation Vyasna reports. Most of the arrests took place in Minsk, where several thousand people participated in a protest march. In its report of 5 November 2020, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) notes widespread ballot rigging in the presidential election, which had ended on 9 August. The organisation recommends a repeat of the election, which Lukashenko officially won with 80.1 percent of the votes. The OSCE report notes serious human rights violations before and after the election, including widespread arrests of peaceful protesters, excessive police violence and systematic torture.

Cameroon

New attacks on schools

On 3 November 2020, armed attackers allegedly stormed a school and kidnapped eleven teachers in the town of Kumbo in the Anglophone North-West region. Apparently, no children were abducted. The background to the crime was unclear. Since 2017, however, riots have been raging in the Anglophone northwest and southwest regions, with violent clashes between separatists and security forces. Schools have also repeatedly been targeted by attacks. On 5 November 2020 a representative of the school in Kumbo informed that the eleven abducted teachers were released.

On 4 November 2020 another attack on a school was reported. Apparently, armed militants attacked Kulu Memorial College in the town of Limbe in the Anglophone south-west region.

According to the United Nations (UN), five attacks on schools in the two Anglophone regions occurred in the last two weeks. It was only at the beginning of October 2020 that several schools in the two Anglophone regions reopened after closure for over four years.

China

Hong Kong: Hotline for suspected breaches of security law

On 5 November 2020, the police have set up a hotline to report suspected violations of the security law in Hong Kong. It is possible to send text messages and audio, photo and video files by email, SMS or via the short message service WeChat.

Xinjiang: USA no longer classifies ETIM as a terrorist organisation

With an instruction published on 5 November 2020, the US government removed the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) from its list of terrorist organisations. A representative of the U.S. Department of State said that for more than ten years there has been no credible evidence that the group still exists. China, on the other hand, considers the organisation as a major culprit for terrorist activities in Xinjiang and abroad, justifying measures against the Muslim minority in Xinjiang, inter alia, by the need to fight ETIM and other terrorist organisations. Independent experts, however, question the importance of the ETIM.

Colombia

Better protection for threatened ex-guerrilla fighters

The Colombian government has agreed to increase the security of former FARC guerrilla fighters and to speed up their reintegration into society. A spokesperson for the former rebels informed that this was the result of a meeting with Colombia's President Iván Duque on 6 November 2020.

Now, meetings are planned with representatives of the interior ministry and other authorities. In the days before, hundreds of ex-FARC guerrillas had marched for several days to the capital Bogotá, drawing attention to continuing violence and lack of protection. On their way, the participants apologized for earlier acts in several places. Media report that more than 235 ex-rebels have been killed since 2016. The peace agreement reached between the FARC and the Colombian government in November 2016 explicitly provides for the protection of demobilised fighters by the government in exchange for the surrender of weapons.

Côte d'Ivoire

Ouattara wins presidential election

President Alassane Ouattara won the presidential election of 31 October 2020 by an overwhelming majority. The 78-year-old secured 94.27 percent of the votes, the electoral commission stated on 3 November 2020. The three other remaining candidates follow by a wide margin: Kouadio Konan Bertin and former President Henri Konan Bédié with about two percent each and former Prime Minister Pascal Affi N'Guessan with about one percent of the votes. It should be noted that the latter two had explicitly called on their supporters to boycott the controversial presidential election. The result has yet to be confirmed by the constitutional council of Côte d'Ivoire. According to the Electoral Commission, the turnout was 53.90 percent, but opposition representatives claim that in fact far fewer Ivoirians went to the polls.

Media report that political opponents of Ouattara were taken into police custody in the days following the election, including the presidential candidate Pascal Affi N'Guessan on 6 November 2020.

Large parts of the opposition say that Ouattara's candidacy was unconstitutional, as he has already completed the two five-year terms as president permitted by the Ivorian constitution (he had been elected for the first time in 2010). On 14 September 2020, the constitutional court confirmed Ouattara's argumentation that the counting of terms of office started all over again when a new constitution was adopted in 2016. Observers of the political situation also criticise the fact that 40 of the original 44 presidential candidates were not admitted to the elections, including potentially promising candidates such as ex-president Laurent Gbagbo and ex-prime minister Guillaume Soro (see BN of 21 September 2020). The day of the vote was overshadowed by violence and tension in several places. Some media reported that at least three people were killed on 31 October 2020, others put the figure at least twelve. Apparently, violent clashes between government supporters and opponents continued after election

day. Human Rights Watch (HRW) says that more than 20 people were killed in the run-up to the election. Around 35,000 soldiers were mobilised to safeguard the election (see BN of 2 November 2020).

Egypt

More than 400 demonstrators released

Following the arrest of around 2,000 people by the security forces during demonstrations in September 2019, a court has now decided to grant conditional release to more than 400 of these arrested protesters. Among those released are well-known journalists, activists and bloggers.

Egypt / Ethiopia / Sudan

Talks between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over the Nile Dam fail again

Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan have again failed to agree on a solution to the long-standing dispute over the use of the GERD (Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam) project on the Blue Nile. The main questions left open are the time frame and the quantities of water to be filled into the reservoir. Ethiopia intends to use the hydropower plant to become Africa's largest electricity exporter. Egypt, on the other hand, fears negative effects on the course of the Nile, which is the country's most important water source by far. In July, Ethiopia began filling the reservoir. Sudan and Egypt reject any unilateral action by Ethiopia and call for a political solution to the dispute.

The talks resumed in October, immediately after US President Donald Trump had accused Ethiopia of 'breaking an already negotiated compromise with Egypt and Sudan on the dam project'. This could put Egypt into a 'dangerous situation' and force the country to 'blow up the project'. However, it remained unclear to observers as to which compromise Trump was referring to, as the parties to the conflict had not publicly announced an agreement during their talks.

Ethiopia

Escalation in Tigray: Ethiopia sends military to the regional state

In the night of 4 November 2020, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered troops to the Tigray region, after the regional government there had 'crossed the final point of the red line', making a 'military confrontation' inevitable, he stated in a television address. He referred to an attack by armed units of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which is ruling in the region, on several Ethiopian military barracks both in the provincial capital Mekele and in the city of Dansha the day before; apparently several soldiers were killed and heavy weapons were stolen in the incident.

Since then, fierce fighting between the militias and the military has apparently been taking place, including airstrikes which have destroyed TPLF weapon depots. Fighting is also reported to have occurred in Abdurafi near the border between Tigray and the neighbouring Amhara region. Six people have been reported killed and over 60 injured. Apparently, the Ethiopian armed forces receive support from local units in Amhara. Other sources, however, report only isolated clashes. More detailed information is not available because telephone and Internet connections in Tigray were interrupted. A six-month state of emergency has been imposed on the region. A member of the government said that this allows for curfews, searches without warrants, transport and communication restrictions and also the detention of 'individuals suspected of participating in illegal activities that threaten the constitutional order'. In fact, the Ethiopian military will have to expect considerable resistance, as Tigray has a strong paramilitary security apparatus. According to estimates by the International Crisis Group (ICG), the regional troops and associated militias number up to 250,000 men. There is also a risk of the Ethiopian army splitting and ethnic Tigray joining the regional units, the ICG said. Some diplomats have claimed that the Ethiopian army's northern division, which is stationed in the Tigray region, has already denied loyalty to the central government and is supporting the regional state.

Contrary to what the Ethiopian government has stated, analysts had already predicted the danger of armed conflict and pointed to tensions between Abiy and the government in Tigray region, which had begun when Abiy took office

in April 2018. Tensions have escalated in recent weeks when regional elections were held in Tigray in September despite the fact that the Ethiopian parliament had extended all terms of office and postponed all elections due to the corona pandemic (see BN of 7 and 21 September 2020). The regional government then declared that it would no longer recognise Abiy, who in turn declared the Tigray leadership illegitimate, imposed financial sanctions and finally appointed a provisional interim government for Tigray on 7 November 2020.

Only a year ago, Prime Minister Abiy was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his reform policies in Ethiopia and for his peace efforts with Eritrea, among others. However, ethnic unrest has increased considerably. Many observers compare Ethiopia with the former multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia, fearing a 'Balkanisation' of the country and expecting not only the danger of civil war, but also a threat to the entire region in the Horn of Africa. As a precautionary measure, Sudan has already closed its borders with Ethiopia.

Besides, Eritrea's involvement in the conflict is not entirely ruled out. The northern neighbour is hostile to the regional government in Tigray and blames it for the fact that disputed areas (in particular the town of Badme, around which a border war had been fought between 1998 and 2000) have still not been handed over to Eritrea, in spite of the peace agreement concluded between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2019. That is why rumours are circulating that President Abiy had discussed the operation in the Tigray region with Eritrea's President Isaias or had informed him in advance. The government has rejected reports of dead soldiers in Eritrean uniform as false. While there are unconfirmed reports of Eritrean troop movements in the Tigray border region, there is currently no evidence of fighting between Eritrean forces and Tigray units.

Ethnic violence in the regional state of Oromia

On 1 November 2020, the village of Gawa Qanqa in the Guliso district of the West Wollega zone in the Oromo regional state was the scene of a 'brutal terrorist attack', the government stated. No information was given on the number of victims, who are apparently ethnic Amhars. Amnesty International (AI) spoke of at least 54 killed, and the Ethiopian State Human Rights Commission (EHRC) stated that at least 32 civilians were killed. Some 750 residents were displaced. Security forces have been sent to the region, but they are accused of having left the civilian population defenceless against the attackers because they had withdrawn some days before. The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA-Shane) is blamed for the crime. It is an armed splinter group of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which had been classified as a terrorist group, but later followed Abiy's reform course and ended the armed struggle for Oromo rights in 2018. The Oromo are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, but felt marginalised by the national government for a long time.

Georgia

Tens of thousands demand new elections - police use violence against protesters

On 8 November 2020, one week after the parliamentary elections in Georgia, tens of thousands opposition supporters staged protests in the capital Tbilisi. Some 45,000 people gathered in front of the parliament building and called for new elections. Police used violence against the demonstrators. Apparently, the security forces used water cannons and tear gas without warning. Georgia is in a political crisis after the ruling party 'Georgian Dream' has claimed to have won the elections, while the opposition spoke of electoral fraud. Observers from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have judged the vote to be free overall and without serious violations. Opposition representatives, however, have reported many irregularities. All opposition parties in the country have refused to recognise the election results.

Ghana

Proceedings against alleged supporters of an independent Western Togoland

On 4 November 2020, a court in Accra released 22 individuals who had been arrested in connection with a raid on two police stations in the Volta region on 25 September 2020 (see BN of 5 October 2020). The public prosecutor's office had dropped the relevant charges. 29 more people are still in pre-trial detention in connection with the incident; they are accused of conspiracy to commit crimes, participation in the activities of a banned organisation,

high treason and sedition, among other things. The defendants apparently belong to the Western Togoland Restoration Front (WTRF), which seeks independence from Ghana of an area called Western Togoland. Also in connection with the attack, 60 alleged followers of another separatist group, the Homeland Study Group Foundation (HSGF), had been arrested in September 2020 and were released on 21 October 2020 without giving any reasons. Reports published at the end of October 2020 indicate that one individual has died in custody. In the view of Albert Kan Dapaah, minister for national security, there is another separatist group called the People's Liberation Council (PLC).

Honduras

Increasing violence against women

The latest figures from the Observatorio de la Violencia de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (OV-UNAH) show that gender-based violence in Honduras has been rising steadily for years, media reports say. Due to the measures taken against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence and feminicides have increased even further. According to OV-UNAH, 245 women were killed between January and September this year. The Women's Movement for Peace (Movimiento de Mujeres por la Paz) Visitación Padilla reports that during the same period the national emergency system received 76,520 calls for help in cases of domestic and intra-family violence. Compared to the previous year, this is an increase of eight percent.

India

Kashmir: rebel leaders killed

On 1 November 2020, a leading commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen, one of the largest armed separatist movements active in the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, was killed by Indian security forces in an operation in Srinagar.

Kashmir: Shooting at the Line of Control

On 8 November 2020, four Indian soldiers and three militants died in gunfights on the military control line between the Indian and Pakistani controlled parts of Kashmir. This is the highest number of victims at the Line of Control since April this year, when five Indian soldiers and an equal number of militants were killed.

Iraq

Security operations against IS fighters

On 8 November 2020 the Iraqi security forces launched a new security operation against IS fighters in Salahaddin province.

Attacks by IS militants

In the evening of 8 November 2020 at least eleven people were killed in an attack on an observation post of the Popular Mobilization Units / Hashd al-Shaabi west of Baghdad. The IS has not yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

Also on 8 November 2020, a Hashd al-Shaabi member was injured in a car bomb explosion near the Hamrin Mountains located between Diyala and Salahaddin provinces.

Anti-government protests

During new anti-government protests, one demonstrator was killed and 40 others injured in Basra on 6 November 2020. The protesters demanded jobs and better basic services.

On 8 November 2020 hundreds of protesters in Baghdad demanded the withdrawal of US troops.

Kosovo

Prosecution for war crimes: President resigns and is arrested

On 5 November 2020 President Hashim Thaçi announced his resignation, confirming the preliminary indictment of the Special Prosecutor's Office (SPO) before the Kosovo War Crimes Special Chambers (KSC, Kosovo Specialist Chambers, located in The Hague; see BN of 31 August 2020) which was issued on that day. Thaçi stated that he wanted to ensure he would not face trial while serving as president; his resignation would defend the integrity of the state. In doing so, he was honouring a promise he had made after the preliminary indictment was filed in June 2020. Otherwise, his five-year term as president would have expired in April 2021. Ms Vjosa Osmani, President of the Parliament, took over the office. Following his press statement, Thaçi himself went to the headquarters of the EU rule of law mission EULEX. He was transferred to the KSC's detention centre in the Netherlands on the evening of 5 November 2020.

Further arrests of high-ranking politicians

On 4 November 2020, just one day before the President's resignation, the SPO had arrested former parliamentary speaker Jakup Krasniqi (see BN of 31 August 2020, where he was wrongly referred to as the current parliamentary speaker), with logistical support from EULEX and operational support from the Kosovo police. Krasniqi had held this office from December 2007 to July 2014, acting twice as interim state president. Krasniqi was transferred to The Hague. Arrests and transfers of Kadri Veseli, Chairman of the PDK (Democratic Party of Kosovo) and Rexhep Selimi, member of parliament for the Vetëvendosje party, followed on 5 November 2020.

The preliminary indictment charges Thaçi, Krasniqi, Veseli, Selimi and others with serious crimes on ten counts, including almost 100 murders of Serbs, Roma and members of other ethnic groups and also of Kosovo Albanians considered to be political opponents. The defendants had been commanders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK) during the war for independence in 1998-1999. The preliminary indictment, unusually published before the confirmation, says that Thaçi was accused of undermining the work of the KSC and SPO in his own interest. This accusation was repeated by the SPO in a press release on 19 October 2020. Thaçi's political initiative concerning the mandate of the KSC (see BN of 31 August 2020) had in fact served this purpose, the press release said.

On 24 September 2020 Salih Mustafa, also a former UÇK officer, was the first person to be arrested for trial at the KSC (see BN of 28 September 2020). On 28 October 2020, Mustafa pleaded not guilty to the judge in the preliminary proceedings. Thaçi also denies the accusations against him and the other defendants.

Lebanon

New lockdown

In the aftermath of the explosion on 4 August 2020, which destroyed a considerable part of Lebanon's medical capacity, the SARS CoV-2 virus is spreading largely unhindered and exponentially in Lebanon. The number of cases has risen from less than 200 per day to more than 2,000 per day. Various contact restrictions and other measures had proved to be largely ineffective in recent weeks, especially as the housing situation has become much more critical. Several buildings have already collapsed due to the onset of the heavy winter rains. In addition, large parts of the population are only able to comply with quarantine requests to a very limited extent in view of their economic situation. Therefore, a nationwide lockdown is being prepared, which is reportedly to apply from 12 November 2020 for an initial period of 15 days and to be monitored by the security forces.

Mali

Jihadists killed

On 2 November 2020, the French military informed that at least 50 jihadists were killed and four captured during a military operation in an area near the border with Burkina Faso and Niger.

Mozambique

Dozens killed and feared drowned

In the course of the conflict in the north-eastern province of Cabo Delgado (see BN of 2 November 2020), a total of 74 people attempted to flee from the disputed areas by boat across the sea on 1 November 2020. Approx. 40 people are missing after the boat capsized. In the previous week alone, some 10,000 displaced persons are reported to have arrived by boat in the provincial capital of Pemba, located further south. Media report that 15 young people and five adults have been killed in a massacre allegedly committed by Islamist rebels. They were found beheaded on 2 November 2020 in Muidumbe district. The site of the massacre has a predominantly Christian population unlike the rest of the province which is predominantly Muslim. It is therefore assumed that the attack was not carried out for the purpose of recruitment, in contrast to an attack with 52 dead on the village of Xitaxi on 7 April 2020 (see BN of 27 April 2020). There are first reports of violence spreading to neighbouring Tanzania.

Pakistan

13-year-old Christian girl forced into marriage rescued

On 3 November 2020, a 13-year-old Christian girl was rescued under public pressure; court proceedings were opened at the Sindh High Court on the grounds of forced marriage against the 44-year-old alleged husband, who has been arrested in the meantime. The girl had been forcibly converted and subsequently married (see BN of 2 November 2020).

Attack on Hindu temple in Karachi

On 1 November 2020, an angry mob attacked a temple of a Hindu community in the densely populated poor district of Lyari in Karachi (Sindh) after a member was accused of blasphemy. A Hindu politician said that discrimination against religious minorities in Sindh province has increased since the Pakistan People's Republic (PPP) secured the majority in the provincial assembly. This has apparently been the third incident of vandalism against a Hindu temple in three weeks in Sindh.

Bank employee shot at for blasphemy accusations

On 4 November 2020, a security guard in a bank fired in dispute on an employee who was accused of blasphemy in Qaidabad in the north-west of Punjab province. The victim needed surgery and was in critical condition. Apparently, the perpetrator was celebrated by a crowd of people afterwards.

Pakistan / India

Gilgit-Baltistan to be granted provisional provincial status

On 1 November 2020 Prime Minister Imran Khan announced that the special territory of **Gilgit-Baltistan, presently** under federal administration, is to be granted provisional provincial status, during a visit to the said territory which is located north of Kashmir and bordering Afghanistan and China. The announcement met with criticism in India, which also raises territorial claims.

Somalia

Media representatives sentenced to prison term

On 4 November 2020, the managing director of Astan Cable TV was sentenced to five years imprisonment and a fine of two billion Somaliland shillings by a court in Hargeisa, Somaliland. He had been arrested in July. The company was also banned from operating in Somaliland. The Somaliland authorities accuse him of having links with al-Shabaab, while those critical of the conviction say it was a political trial. Also in the past, the authorities in Somaliland have arrested media representatives and journalists.

Sentenced to death for rape

A court has sentenced two men to death for the abduction, rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl in Bosaso, Puntland. Apparently, the men have confessed to the crime. Rape and sexual violence against women are relatively common in Somalia, but few perpetrators are convicted.

Attacks

Al-Shabaab reportedly shot dead two secret service agents in Mogadishu on 1 November 2020.

On 5 November 2020, a Somali Minister escaped a bomb attack unhurt; however, other people were injured. No group has immediately claimed responsibility for the assault, but al-Shabaab militants regularly attack government officials.

Syria

Idlib: Several people killed in shelling

Reports both from the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the Syrian Civil Defence (White Helmets) indicate that on 4 November 2020, seven people were killed by government troops in an artillery fire in the provincial capital of Idlib and two nearby towns, Ariha in the south and Kefraya in the north; a further 17 people were injured.

The international evangelical relief organisation World Vision reports a total of eight deaths; among them two employees of a local partner organisation.

Tanzania

Magufuli sworn in as President - opposition candidate seeks protection in German embassy

Despite his controversial election victory, Tanzania's incumbent President John Magufuli took the oath of office for a second five-year term on 4 November 2020. According to official figures, Magufuli won the election with 84 percent of the votes (see BN of 2 November 2020).

The day before the swearing-in ceremony, leading opposition figures were arrested, among them the opposition competitor for the presidency Tundu Lissu, and the chairman of the Chadema, Freeman Mbowe. Both had called for protests after the elections of 28 October 2020 against what they saw as falsified election results. Immediately after his release, Lissu apparently sought protection at the German embassy in Dar es Salaam, having previously been refused refuge at the US embassy.

Turkey

Fines in the millions against social networks

On 4 November 2020, the Turkish government imposed fines of millions (Turkish lira) on Facebook, Twitter and other social networks. The fines are based on the new law on social media (see BN of 5 October, 3 August and 27 July 2020). The fine was based on the fact that no local representatives for Turkey had been appointed within the prescribed period, infrastructure minister Sayan stated. If the platforms did not fulfil their legal obligations within 30 days, they would be threatened with a further 30 million lira fine (approx. 3.06 million euros) and also a considerable reduction of bandwidth, the minister added.

Uganda

Opposition politician arrested

On 3 November 2020, security forces arrested opposition politician Bobi Wine shortly after his confirmation as presidential candidate for the 2021 elections. Apparently, police pulled him out of his car and held him in a police vehicle for several hours. He himself said that police had physically abused him there. He was eventually driven home and released. The police stated that Wine was arrested because he was trying to hold an illegal rally. Clashes

occurred between security forces and supporters of Wine who had gathered in front of his house on the outskirts of Kampala. The security forces used tear gas to disperse the crowd. Both civilians and police were injured in the clashes, and almost 50 people were arrested. On 14 October 2020, the Kampala office of the Wine's National Unity Platform (NUP) had been searched by police (see BN of 19 October 2020).

Another presidential candidate, Patrick Amuriat for the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), was also arrested and released the same day.

On 2 November 2020 President Museveni, who has been in power since 1986, confirmed his presidential candidacy. Eleven presidential candidates have been registered for the forthcoming elections, but Wine is considered to be Museveni's main rival.

Venezuela

COVID 19 pandemic

Venezuela has been fighting the COVID-19 pandemic for several months with a system of interrupted lockdown, with all non-essential operations closing for one week and remaining open for one week; additional regional restrictions are in place. In view of the emerging success of this strategy, a significant relaxation is being considered for December.

However, the figures given are highly unreliable. Observers and critics point to the minimal testing capacities and the lack of equipment in the health care system. Moreover, the official figures within South America bear no relation to the case numbers of all neighbouring countries. Much higher rates are plausible, both due to considerable migration at the border and lack of supply and testing.

Yemen

Civilians wounded in Taizz

On 4 November 2020 several children were injured when the Houthis bombarded a residential area in Taizz governorate. The day before, several Houthi rebels and government soldiers were killed in fighting in the region.