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Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

6 July 2015

Afghanistan

Security situation

At least two people died and dozens were injured in a suicide bombing near the police headquarters in the city of Lashkar Gah in the southern Afghan province of Helmand on 30 June 15.

Many people were injured in another suicide bombing of a NATO convoy near the US embassy in Kabul on the same day.

Hundreds of Taliban fighters attacked a checkpoint of the Afghan security forces in the districts of Chak and Jalrez in the central province of Wardak on 02 July 15. Allegedly they took control of more than half of the checkpoints in Chak and all in Jalrez. At least thirty insurgents, 18 police officers and two civilians are said to have lost their lives during the three day fighting.

BBC reported that Taliban and IS jihadists fought each other in several districts of the eastern province of Nangarhar over the last weeks. Allegedly the IS fighters, styling themselves as Chorasani division (land of the rising sun), called for the killing of Taliban leader Mullah Omar claiming that their leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was the true caliph. Nangarhar was the location of Osama bin Laden's mountain fortress Tora Bora. An Arab minority accounting for about 2.5% of the population is living in this province. Reportedly disenfranchised Taliban joined the Afghan IS in Nangarhar and in the western province of Farah.

Death sentences for lynching set aside

A court of appeal set aside the death sentences for four men convicted in the first instance of participating in the lynching of a 27-year-old woman by a mob in Kabul in March 2015. The woman had wrongly been accused of burning a Koran and had then been beaten to death. The death sentences of three of the convicts were commuted to 20 years imprisonment and the fourth death sentence to 10 years. Eight further perpetrators had been given sentences of 16 years in prison each. Eleven policemen who had watched quietly from the side-lines were each given prison sentences of one year.

Iraq

June 2015 bloodiest month so far

The UN mission in Iraq informed on 01 July 2015 that June had been the month with most bloodshed ever in Iraq. Over 1,450 people, including more than 650 civilians and 800 members of the security forces, had lost their lives in fighting, terror bombings and other acts of violence. The security forces not only include members of the army, but also of the Kurdish Peshmerga and Shia militias, all of which are fighting IS. Almost 1,700 people had been wounded. There are further reports of casualties due to lack of water, food or medical care; this information could, however, not be verified.

IS in control of parts of Baidji in northern Iraq

In the evening of 04 July 2015 IS attacked the northern city of Baidji where one of the country's largest refineries is located. IS now controls three of the city's boroughs.

Missile and bomb attacks in the month of fast

More violence occurred in other parts of the country. At least 18 died when a rocket hit the IS controlled city of Ramadi in the west. In several bomb explosions in Baghdad, Balad Rus and Mhamoudiya (northeast and south of the capital respectively) at least eleven (other sources say 19) people were killed on 04 July 15. The bombs were detonated in the evening when many people met to break the fast.

Syria

Air strikes of ar-Raqqa

Allegedly the international coalition succeeded on 04 July in destroying the IS-controlled structures and transport routes for fighters and equipment by flying 16 air strikes on the IS stronghold ar-Raqqa.

Attack on al-Nusra Front

At least 25 al-Nusra Front members who had met in a mosque in Ariha (Idlib province) to break the fast were killed in an explosion on 03 July 15. The al-Nusra Front blamed the attack on IS.

Fighting for Tel Abyad

On 30 June 2015 IS had succeeded in reconquering areas east of the border town of Tel Abyad with the help of Sunni fighters from the city. Two weeks ago IS had been ousted from the same area by Kurdish People's Protection Units who managed to drive IS from the city again on 01 July 15. Thus the Kurds are in control of an area extending about 400 km along the border to neighbouring Turkey.

Fighting in Aleppo

Heavy fighting since 03 July 2015 is reported from parts of Aleppo. The reports say that the Fatah Halab rebel group conquered the Scientific Research Centre in Aleppo's western part that the Syrian leadership turned into barracks.

Syrian army and Hezbollah take control of parts of Zabadani

On 04 July 2015 the Syrian army and the Shia Hezbollah militia started a major offensive against Sunni rebels and took parts of the city of Zabadani on the Lebanese border. The city is close to the highway between Beirut and Damascus which had been Hezbollah's supply route for arms from Syria before the civil war.

Israel/Syria

UN Golan mandate extended to the end of the year

Despite repeated attacks on UN soldiers the Security Council extended the mission on the Golan Heights until the end of the year. On 06 July 2015 the 15 members of the UN body unanimously adopted a resolution extending the UNDOF mandate (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force) on the Israeli Syrian border until the end of the year. At the same time it voiced its concern about the deteriorating security situation and strongly denounced the attacks on UN soldiers. After the 1973 Yom Kippur war UN soldiers had been deployed to the Golan Heights to monitor the ceasefire between Syria and Israel. But the roughly 1,200 soldiers are constantly dragged into the Syrian civil war.

Yemen

Heavy fighting for the port city of Aden

In recent days government forces and the Shia Houthi rebels have engaged in heavy fighting for control over the southern port of Aden. Officials said that at least 14 people were killed in massive air raids by the Arab military coalition and missiles fired by the Houthis on 05 July 15. Dozens more died in fighting in other parts of the country. The authorities reported that eight people died in the air raids of the Saudi-led military coalition in Aden, six more from the Houthi rebels' missiles. The port city has been the last refuge of President Abd-Rabbo Mansour Hadi, before the Houthi's advance in March had forced him to flee to Saudi Arabia. Ever since then fighting has been raging in the city.

United Nations declare humanitarian emergency

In the light of the disastrous situation in Yemen the UN have declared a humanitarian emergency. After a meeting of the UN emergency aid coordinator Stephen O'Brien with relief organisations UN spokesman Farhan Haq said on 01 July 2015 that all parties had agreed that level three - the top level - of a humanitarian alert had to be declared. This puts Yemen in the same category as Iraq, South Sudan, and Syria. Haq said that the classification would preliminarily apply for six months. The UN reports that currently over 21 million people, i.e. 80% of the total population in Yemen, are depending on humanitarian aid. A few days ago O'Brien had also warned of a famine in Yemen. At the moment intense fighting is taking place between the rebels of the Shiite Houthis militia and its allies on the one hand and government troops on the other which are supported by the military coalition under the leadership of Saudi Arabia. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has repeatedly called for a ceasefire.

Egypt

IS attacks on Sinai

On 01 July 2015 over 120 people died in IS attacks on 15 Egyptian army checkpoints. The military reported that over 100 jihadists and 21 soldiers had been killed.

New anti-terrorism act announced

Justice Minister Ahmed al-Sind said that the cabinet had approved a new anti-terrorism act which also provides for prison sentences for journalists publishing information on terrorist attacks that run counter to the official statements. President al-Sissi's approval of the law is considered certain.

Tunisia

State of emergency in Tunisia

According to reports of the official news agency Tap President Essebsi declared a state of emergency for the next 30 days on 04 July 15, one week after the terror attack on tourists in Sousse. During this time the security forces are vested with far-reaching rights. Freedom of assembly is restricted and the government may take all measures required to control the press and publications of any kind.

Mali

Further attacks

On 28 June 2015 armed men attacked the city of Fakola in Mali's south, prompting Ivory Coast to step up its border security along the northern border with Mali.

At least six MINUSMA soldiers died in an attack in Mali's north-east (between Timbuktu and Goundam) on 02 July 15. Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQMI) claimed responsibility for the attack

Chad

Action taken against Boko Haram:

After the double bombing in Chad's capital N'Djamena on 15 June 2015 Chad is taking action against the Boko Haram cells within the country. Five members of the security forces and six suspects were killed in a raid of an illegal arms depot in the capital on 29 June 2015 when one of the extremists detonated his explosive belt. Fanyae (alias Mahamat Moustapha) who is known as Boko Haram's leader in Chad and northern Cameroon was arrested.

Somalia

Al-Shabaab attacks

In an al-Shabaab attack on a Somali army patrol near the southern port of Kismayo at least 15 people were killed on 29 June 15, among them at least eight Islamist fighters. Also on 29 June 2015 in another al-Shabaab attack on Burundian AMISOM soldiers (see BN of 29 June 15) several people were injured south of Mogadishu.

Government troops and AMISOM kill civilians

Allegedly the Somali army and AMISOM killed 16 civilians, including five Koran school teachers, whom they had mistaken for al-Shabaab members in the Galgaduud region in central Somalia.

Female public prosecutors appointed

Somalian Justice Minister Abdullahi Ahmed Jama appointed six female lawyers to the office of public prosecutor at the beginning of July 2015. They are to focus on prosecuting crimes against women and children. Somalia now has at least 17 public prosecutors. Plans are calling for installing one prosecutor in each of the country's regions.

Nigeria

About 150 die in Boko Haram attacks on villages

In the evening of 01 July 2015 about 50 fighters of the terror organization Boko Haram attacked the village of Kukawa on the shores of Lake Chad. At first they shot prayers in several mosques, mostly men and boys, next they killed women in their houses. Official reports spoke of at least 97 casualties.

In the night of 30 June 2015 Boko Haram fighters ambushed the villages Mussaram I and Mussaram II that are about 50 km from Kukawa and near the city of Monguno, shooting about 50 villagers.

These were the most serious attacks since President Buhai took office at the end of May 2015. The Nigerian military announced that more than 600 Boko Haram fighters have been killed last month.

Numerous Boko Haram suicide attacks

On 05 July 2015 a suicide bomber attacked the Redeemed Christian Church of God in the outskirts of the city of Potiskum (Jigawa area) in Yobe state, killing five churchgoers and the pastor.

On 03 July 2015 Boko Haram fighters attacked the village of Zabarmari located about 10 km from Maiduguri. When the villagers started to flee six female suicide bombers blew themselves up in their midst causing several dozen casualties.

In the afternoon of 02 July 2015 at least ten people were killed in two suicide bombings in Borno state near fruit stalls along the highway from Bama to Konduga.

On 01 July 2015 a young female suicide bomber blew herself up in front of the entrance to the Leper and General Hospital about 10 km south-west of Maiduguri in Borno state. A few minutes later an assassin on a bicycle exploded a body-worn bomb at the hospital's fence. Both attackers died and two people were injured.

Two bomb attacks in Jos

On 05 July 2015 a first bomb exploded in a restaurant on Bauchi Road in the city of Jos in Plateau state in central Nigeria, about four minutes later another explosion at Yantaya mosque followed. At least 16 people are reported dead.

Armenia

Peaceful protests continue

Smaller protests against the power price hike continued in other cities such as Vanadzor, Gyumri, Ashtarak, Sisian, Kapan and others. The protests in the capital Yerevan have also abated. No further violent incidents have been reported. The protests could flare up again when the power price review shows that the price increase was lawful.

Ukraine

The situation in Eastern Ukraine

An OSCE representative stated that the situation in Eastern Ukraine has drastically deteriorated over the past week. Observers saw heavy equipment like tanks and howitzers on both sides of the front which the warring parties had committed to recall already in February. Within 24 hours Ukrainian government units lost at least five men because of a mine in the settlement of Donezky and another ten men were wounded. At least two civilians were killed in the area of Luhansk in violations of the ceasefire. The insurgents on their part accused the military of violating the ceasefire.

Kosovo/Serbia

Negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo failed

For the time being the negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia about the integration of Serbian communities into the state of Kosovo have failed. The prime ministers of both countries could not agree on the formation of an association of the four Serbian communities in northern Kosovo. Serbia insists on executive privileges, which Kosovo is unwilling to grant, because it fears a „Bosnia situation“ in which the Serbian part of the country could undermine the country as a whole.

Such an agreement is prerequisite for the initiation of EU accession negotiations with Serbia and for easing visa conditions for Kosovo.

Background

The normalization agreement between the two countries made in 2013 also provides for the formation of so-called Serbian communities in Kosovo. These communities shall give more autonomy to the Serbian minority and do away with the parallel structures so far supported by Serbia. The agreement had been heralded as an historical accord by the international community at the time, but has only been partially implemented as yet. It seems that the efforts for the normalization of Serbian-Kosovar relations of recent years under the guidance of the EU have ended in a cul-de-sac for the moment.

Kosovo

Prime Minister declares Kosovo to be safe

During a visit to Berlin on 30 June 2015 Kosovo's Prime Minister Isa Mustafa criticized the emigration of Kosovo's citizens to Germany. "Those that came last should return. (...) Kosovo is a safe country." Federal Chancellor Merkel promised more aid to improve living conditions in Kosovo.

Federal Army mission extended

On 19 June 2015 the German Parliament approved the extension of the deployment of the Federal Army. It will continue unchanged within the scope of KFOR (Kosovo Force) with a maximum of 1,850 soldiers. Currently 700 German soldiers are on duty there. The cost for the next twelve months is estimated at 47 million euros.

Since 1999 KFOR has been responsible for guaranteeing a safe and stable environment. As the security situation has vastly improved over the last years KFOR's strength could be progressively scaled down. While there originally were 50,000 KFOR-soldiers only about 5,000 are deployed now.

China

Security law adopted

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a comprehensive new security law on 01 July 15. According to the Xinhua news agency it impacts almost all aspects of public life such as politics, defence, finance, the environment, the internet, culture, and religion. It shall serve as the overall framework for the state's national and international actions, including stricter controls of the internet, securing maritime interests and fighting terrorism. Critics fear that the law will bring further restrictions of human rights and negative effects for international relations.