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Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

10 July 2017

Egypt

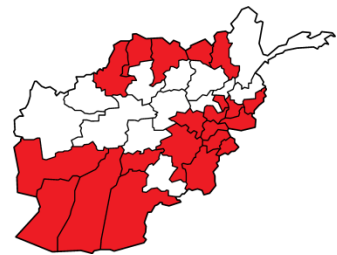
Egyptian security forces reported that an attack of a militia allied with IS on military posts in the north of Sinai on 07 July 2017 left 26 soldiers dead and 21 wounded, 40 extremists were killed. IS claimed that more than 60 soldiers had been killed or injured.

Afghanistan

Armed confrontations

The fighting, purges, and raids of the security forces continue just as the ambushes and attacks of the insurgents which sometimes also leave civilians dead or injured. Following media reports the following provinces were affected in the last two weeks: Nangarhar, Lagham, Kunar (east), Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Uruzgan (south), Kapisa, Logar, Maidan Wardak, Kabul (centre), Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Ghazni (south-east), Farah (west), Kunduz, Takhar (northeast), Faryab, Balkh, and Jawzjan (north).

The head of Kunar province (east) announced that hundreds of IS fighters had appeared in the province.



Assaults and attacks

A road mine killed four members of a family driving in a car in Farah (west) on 04 July 2017. In the Azra district of Logar province (centre) the Taliban decapitated a tribal elder and cut off his hands, nose and ears. In the Khanabad district of Kunduz province (northeast) the Taliban shot four brothers in a dispute about the collection of levies (the Taliban demand the Ushr, a tenth of the harvest, in the areas they control).

On 05 July 2017 a policeman died in a bomb attack in Farah (west). A woman and a child were killed when two missiles hit the city district of Niazbig in the capital of Kabul.

A district head of police and two of his body guards were injured in a bomb attack in Herat province (west) on 06 July 2017. In Nangarhar (east) a shoot-out in a mosque claimed three civilian casualties, another 14 died when a mortar shell exploded.

A bomb killed one civilian and injured four others in Nangarhar province (east) on 08 July 2017.

On 09 July 2017 followers of the Taliban assassinated a member of the Peace Council for Samangan province (north).

Democratic Republic of Congo

Soldiers sentenced for involvement in massacre of civilians

On 06 July 2017 a military tribunal in the city of Mbuji-Mayi convicted eight soldiers among other things for the murder of presumable members of the Kamuina Nsapu militia in Kasai region. A video that surfaced in February 2017 showed soldiers shooting unarmed persons, including several young women, at very close range. Two soldiers were sentenced to death in absentia. Two soldiers received prison sentences of 20 years and three of 15 years. Another defendant was sentenced to one year on probation. One soldier was acquitted.

Iraq

Mosul

On 08 July 2017 the army announced the complete retake of Mosul. A victory address by Haidar Abadis had been scheduled for 10 July 2017, but was delayed, because it seems to have been impossible to find a sufficiently symbolic place in Mosul where no battle noise could be heard. IS fighters are still barricaded in several buildings. It is suspected that suicide bombers are mingling with the flow of refugees and they have repeatedly detonated explosive belts in recent days. Damage to the infrastructure is much more serious than anticipated and the civilians who had been staying in the city districts that were held by IS until the end exhibit serious signs of malnutrition and deficiency diseases. Careful first estimates of the material damage resulting from IS' presence and the recapture result in a figure in the medium one digit billion range. Large parts of the city's west are basically uninhabitable, in particular because IS planted a large number of mines, including in dead bodies which makes their retrieval and burial much more complicated and aggravates the risk of epidemics.

Iran

It seems that the ultra-conservatives still refuse to accept the electoral victory of Hassan Rohani who will start his second term at the beginning of August. On al-Quds day (Jerusalem day commemorating the city's liberation from non-Muslims) protesters shouted insulting slogans and agitated against the nuclear agreement. Rohani maintains that the ultra-conservatives are intentionally trying to destabilize the country.

Former vice-president of ex-president Ahmadinejad imprisoned

ISNA news agency reported that Iran's former vice-president Hamid Baghaei was arrested in Tehran on 09 July 2017, allegedly on corruption charges.

Qatar

Gulf crisis about Qatar persists

On 05 July 2017 four Arab states coordinated their response to Qatar's rejection of their ultimatum with a 13 point list of demands resolving to continue the boycott and promising adequate measures to be taken in time. No further sanctions were imposed at this time.

Kenya

Several casualties in al-Shabaab bombings

On 07 July 2017 suspected fighters of the Islamist terror militia al-Shabaab attacked the two villages of Jima and Poromoko (Lamu district) and decapitated nine men. On the same day the Islamists also assaulted the neighbouring village of Pandanguo killing three policemen.

Kosovo

Radicalization on the rise

According to a current UN report most extremists (on a per-capita basis) who went to the Middle East from European countries came from Kosovo. These extremists have become increasingly influential there in recent years, the report says. Several studies show that Kosovo is the leading European country in terms of exports of extremists (followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Belgium). The police report that 316 Kosovars, including 44 women, went to the Middle East since the war in Syria broke out. The actual figure is probably much higher. A survey shows that 63% of Kosovars consider radicalism a serious problem. 22% think that the actions of suicide bombers are justified (see BN of 22 May 2017).

Libya

Benghazi

The Libyan National Army, Khalifa Haftar (LNA), announced the complete conquest of Benghazi on 09 July 2017. This claim cannot be verified as yet. The LNA had been taking several city districts one by one in recent weeks revealing a disastrous supply situation in the districts held by the extremists.

Tripoli

Fighting with the use of missile launchers broke out between Misratan followers of the government of Khalifa Ghwell (National Salvation Government) and those of the Presidential Council of As-Serraj, the unity government negotiated by the UN, in the Tripoli suburb of Garabulli on 09 July 2017. Allegedly there were a large number of civilian casualties.

Morocco

Casualties during sea crossing

Dozens of refugees drowned when crossing from Morocco to Spain. On 04 July 2017 a half-sunk refugee boat was rescued with three people on board. The relief organization Caminando Fronteras reported that the boat had set out from Morocco on 01 July 2017 carrying 52 passengers. The coast-guard continues its search for the 49 missing passengers. The three rescued passengers who were from Mali and The Gambia were the only ones wearing life vests.

Moldova

Opposition politician given prison sentence

On 28 June 2017 the leader of the opposition party Our Home Moldova (Red Block), Grigore Petrenco and six of the party's members were sentenced to several years of imprisonment. The Petrenco Group had been arrested on 06 September 2015 for organizing and attending a protest. They were accused of attempting to incite to mass unrest. Numerous observers think that there are indications that the sentence was politically motivated.

Corruption scandals and the worsening economy had triggered a number of anti-government protests. Several mass protests had been held against the political influence of the country's oligarchy in the capital Chişinău between fall 2015 and spring of 2016.

Mongolia

Opposition candidate Battulga wins by-elections for presidency

On 07 July 2017 the candidate of the opposition Democratic Party (DP), Khaltmaa Battulga, remained victorious in the by-election for the presidency, taking 50.6% of the votes. His rival, the speaker of the parliament Miyegombo Enkhbold of the governing Mongolian People's Party (MPP), received 41.2% of the votes. Enkhbold acknowledged his defeat.

Nigeria

150 deaths after land disputes

Violent clashes over land ownership erupted between the villagers of Wanikade and Wanihem (southeastern federal state of Cross River, Yala Local Government Area) from 27 to 29 June 2017, causing at least 150 deaths. More than 14,000 were displaced and over 1,200 houses destroyed. The displaced persons found refuge in four camps in the neighbouring state of Benue.

Nigeria/Cameroon

Almost 100 Nigerians killed by Cameroonian gendarmes on Bakassi

Citing information provided by refugees, the Nigerian press reported on 07 July 2017 that on the day before Cameroonian police had killed 97 Nigerians and expelled about one thousand from the city of Abana on the Cameroonian peninsula of Bakassi which borders on Nigeria. The expelled people fled to the Nigerian federal states of Akwa Ibom and Cross River. Reportedly the assaults were caused by the Nigerians' refusal to pay a tax of Naira 100,000 (about €280) for each motor boat they owned. In the nineties the Bakassi peninsula had been the subject of a border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria. In 2002 the International Court of Justice ruled that the entire peninsula belonged to Cameroon. In 2008 the last Nigerian controlled area was handed over to Cameroon.

Saudi Arabia/United Kingdom

Saudi Arabia is largest supporter of extremism in the United Kingdom

The London-based think tank Henry Jackson Society published a report on 05 July 2017 which finds that Saudi Arabia is the strongest supporter of Islamist extremism in the United Kingdom. The report says that Saudi Arabia had spent at least GBP 67bn (€ 76.31bn) in the last 50 years and channelled them through foundations to export Saudi Wahabism - a strictly conservative interpretation of Islam - also to the western Muslim communities. Proof of this is among other things the predominance of radical Islamist preachers and literature, the report states. The study was published to coincide with the publication of a government report on extremism.

Somalia

Attacks

A total of five civilians were killed and about ten injured in several attacks by al-Shabaab in Mogadishu on 01 and 02 July 2017. One of the victims was a businessman who had been targeted by a car bomb. The extremists also claimed responsibility for the murder of a Somali soldier in Mogadishu on 02 July 2017. On 04 July 2017 al-Shabaab fighters fired mortar shells at the presidential residence Villa Somalia wounding four soldiers. On 05 July 2017 al-Shabaab assassinated a government official in Waberi district with a booby trap. Further al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for a bazooka attack on the defence ministry on 05 July 2017 when armed men attempted to storm the premises. On 07 July 2017 al-Shabaab fighters shot a clan elder outside of Mogadishu and in Galkayo (Mudug region) they killed a prominent businessman. It was the fifth attack in that city within one week.

Fighting

On 02 July 2017 a US air raid targeted al-Shabaab fighters and specifically the head of the extremist's intelligence service in the village of Kunya Barrow (Lower Shabelle region). The army reported that 14 al-Shabaab fighters were killed when they ambushed mine clearing units of the army and Ethiopian AMISOM soldiers between Garbaharey and Birta Dher (Gedo region). On 04 July 2017 the US flew an air raid against al-Shabaab fighters near Kismayo (Lower Juba region). There is no information about the number of victims. In an attack on a Somali army convoy in Gofgudud (Bay region) five soldiers were killed and seven wounded on 05 July 2017. When al-Shabaab attacked a Somali army checkpoint in Balad (Middle Shabelle region) on 07 July 2017 two soldiers were killed. A website close to the extremists reported that al-Shabaab fighters killed at least two soldiers in an attack on a Somali army checkpoint near the town of Halgan (Hiiraan region) on 08 July 2017.

Al-Shabaab executes foreign fighters

On 04 July 2017 al-Shabaab executed two of its foreign fighters accused of espionage for western governments in Jilib (Middle Juba region). Reportedly the victims had been Indian nationals and the executions were linked to the air raid in Kunya Barrow on 02 July 2017.

Al-Shabaab fighters sentenced to death in Puntland

A military tribunal in Boosaaso (Bari region) sentenced two al-Shabaab fighters to death and another three to life imprisonment on 06 July 2017. Three defendants were acquitted for lack of evidence.

Kenyan civilians decapitated

About 15 suspected al-Shabaab fighters decapitated nine civilians in the village of Jima in Lamu district in Kenya's southeast on 08 July 2017. On 05 July 2017 security forces and al-Shabaab fighters had engaged in a heavy firefight in Lamu district, after the extremists had attacked a police station.

Syria

Ceasefire

Observers report that the ceasefire in southwestern Syria, that US President Trump and Russian President Putin agreed on at the G20 summit, is being observed. It became effective on 09 July 2017 and includes the provinces of Daraa, Quneitra and Suwayda on the Jordanian border.

Peace talks

The seventh round of peace talks for Syria mediated by the UN started in Geneva on 10 July 2017 and is scheduled to last for one week. It is expected that there will only be indirect negotiations between the government and the opposition again. None of the previous talks in Switzerland about ending the civil war had yielded any tangible results.

Turkey

Mass rally in Istanbul

On 09 July 2017 the "Justice March" of Turkish opposition leader Kilicdaroglu, the chairman of the Republican People's Party CHP, reached its destination after three weeks and more than 400 kilometres. The protest march ended peacefully with a mass rally in Istanbul. Tens of thousands had walked along with the march from Ankara. Several hundred thousand people attended the mass rally in Istanbul. The protesters demanded the lifting of the state of emergency and the return to democratic principles.

Western Balkans

Balkan route still active

More than a year ago the so-called Balkan route was officially closed down. Although the number of transit refugees has dropped significantly since then, the Balkan route is still not totally sealed. While FRONTEX recorded 122,779 illegal border crossings in 2016, there were only 4,387 until April 2017. However, the route has become more difficult, more expensive and more dangerous. This is why mostly young men from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq venture on this route.

The UNHCR reports that officially 5,895 refugees were stuck in Serbia trying to move on from there. Some have been there for one year already. 94% are housed in 18 reception camps, the remainder is staying in railway station barracks and illegal camps on the border. The report says that some camps are hopelessly overcrowded, the sanitary conditions in others are precarious. 329 people applied for asylum in Serbia.