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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Security situation

According to a UN report, Afghanistan experienced over 9,200 security incidents between February 2024 and February 2025, in which at least 210 civilians were killed and 429 others were injured.

According to the annual report published by the successor organisation to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), Rawadari, 544 people were killed in 2024, including 40 women and 101 children. A further 224 people, including seven women and 60 children, were injured. According to the report, the casualties were caused by targeted bombings, suicide attacks, explosive remnants of war and extrajudicial killings. Victims included former government employees and their families, tribal elders and Taliban opponents. Rawadari documented 885 detentions by the Taliban in 2024, an increase of 42 percent compared to the previous year. Among those detained were 142 former government employees (an increase of 20.3 percent) and 282 people accused of collaborating with opposition groups (double the number in 2023). The increase in arrests is attributed to the Taliban's enforcement of the so-called Law on the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue, which was enacted in August 2024.¹

Governance and persecution

At a ceremony held in Kabul on 20.03.25, the Taliban opened the fourth school year as girls above sixth grade remain banned from attending school, marking the fourth consecutive year of Taliban-imposed restrictions on female education.

The Taliban Ministry of Education announced on 20.03.25 that large "jihadi" religious schools with a capacity of 1,000 students each were now operating in all 34 provinces of the country.

The Taliban's Directorate of Information and Culture in Kandahar province issued a new directive on 17.03.25 banning the broadcasting of women's voices on radio stations in the province.

More than two months after the start of the financial year, many public employees, especially teachers at public schools, state that they have still not received their salaries. The average monthly salary is around AFN 8,000 (approximately USD 110 as of 24.04.2025). At the beginning of February 2025, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid promised via social media that all government employees would be paid by the end of the month (cf. BN of 03.02.25 and 17.02.25).

According to statistics provided by the Taliban Supreme Court, the Taliban publicly flogged at least 456 people across the country, including 60 women, in the year 1403 of the Persian Hijra solar calendar (March 2024 to March 2025).

The International Committee of the Red Cross has warned that almost 80 percent of the Afghan population – around 33 million people – do not have sufficient access to clean drinking water.²

Central African Republic

UN report on violence in the southeast

A report published on 05.03.25 based on joint investigations conducted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the blue helmet mission MINUSCA details evidence of mass executions, sexual violence, torture, degrading treatment, forced labour and the looting of houses and shops. Specifically, according to UN News, the report highlights two waves of attacks in the prefectures of Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou (southeast) in October 2024 and on 21.01.25, in which a total of at least 24 people were killed. The report states that the armed group Wagner Ti Azandé (WTA) directed and coordinated the attacks. WTA, which was previously part of the militia Azandé Ani Kpi Gbé (cf. BN of 08.05.23 and 26.06.23) that had already been involved in local fighting, reportedly had links to the army.

According to the report, members of Peul pastoral communities, in particular, but also other Muslim communities, were targeted in both attacks for allegedly supporting the militia Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique (Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC)). Members of the Zandé and Sudanese refugees were reportedly also affected. Following the attack on 21.01.25, which targeted a Peul camp near the town of Mboki, at least 14 WTA members were reportedly arrested. However, the state presence in the affected parts of the country was said to be limited, which favours impunity.³

Brothers of former prime minister arrested

Two brothers of former Prime Minister Henri-Marie Dondra (cf. BN of 14.02.22), Christian and Eusèbe Dondra, were arrested on 19.03.25 and 20.03.25. According to media reports, they are accused of being part of a conspiracy to poison President Faustin-Archange Touadéra and leading members of the ruling party Mouvement cœurs unis (United Hearts Movement (MCU)) with the aim of overthrowing the constitutional order. Henri-Marie Dondra, who founded his own party Unité républicaine (Republican Unity (UNIR)) after his dismissal, is expected to run in the upcoming presidential election to be held in December 2025. Touadéra is then likely to seek a third term in office, which the controversial new constitution adopted by referendum on 30.07.23 (cf. BN of 14.08.23) would allow him to do.⁴

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Concerns about the economy due to conflict in the east

Several Congolese members of the Makutano Network, the largest business network in Central Africa, have warned in a guest article about the impact the conflict in the east of the country is having on the economy. The security situation there continues to exert considerable pressure on the national economy and the private sector in particular. For example, investors are less likely to invest in conflict areas. However, the financial sector is being particularly hard hit. North and South Kivu account for more than 50 percent of the country's microfinance sector. The two provinces are said to form the third-largest banking region after Kinshasa and Katanga and are therefore a major financial and economic hub, which is currently cut off from the rest of the country as a result of the conflict. There are reportedly difficulties in carrying out transactions, meaning that amounts of money are tied up. Access to cash is also difficult. The telecommunications sector is also suffering as a result of the conflict; entire villages are said to have been cut off from telecommunications.

The state is reportedly also struggling with the effects. For one thing, the loss of taxes and tax-like revenues in the conflict-ridden provinces is problematic. Civil servants have been asked to stop working in the east until further notice, and the administration has been replaced.⁵

Iran

Isolated arrests in the context of Persian New Year celebrations

According to media reports issued on 23.03.25, several individuals who took part in the nationwide celebrations for the Persian New Year (Nowruz) were arrested on 21.03.25.

In at least three provinces, including Fars, Khorasan Razavi and Kurdistan, isolated arrests were made, according to the respective local public prosecutor's offices. The reasons for this reportedly include offences such as insulting and disrupting public order and violating Islamic norms. Anti-government slogans are said to have been chanted at historical sites during some ceremonies. Video footage circulating on social media showed women taking part in the celebrations without wearing the obligatory headscarf. The public prosecutor of Kurdistan province reportedly announced that the individuals detained were protest leaders who had been spreading propaganda against the regime and had links to groups and organisations without, however, defining them in detail.

A Kurdish human rights organisation based in Norway reported on 24.03.25 that at least 41 people had been arrested in the province of Kurdistan, including six minors. The information cannot be independently verified.

The Nowruz celebrations belong to the most important cultural events in Iran and other countries in the Middle East. According to the Iranian constitution, they do not require official authorisation. Nevertheless, the government is endeavouring to curb the celebrations through measures such as summonses, threats and temporary arrests, particularly in provinces with a Kurdish population. The reasons for this are mainly seen in the pre-Islamic tradition of the festival.⁶

Freedom of the press: prison sentences imposed after anti-regime reporting

According to a report issued by a Kurdish human rights organisation based in Norway on 17.03.25, five journalists, two women and three men, have been sentenced to prison terms of varying lengths. The charges were based on accusations such as spreading anti-government propaganda, gathering and conspiracy against national security. The defendants are said to have been sentenced to between three months and around three-and-a-half years in prison. The journalists were reportedly accused of criticising government corruption and officials' misconduct in relation to the Metropol building collapse incident that occurred in Abadan (Khuzestan province) in 2022.

On 23.05.22, the collapse of a high-rise building in the city of Abadan was reported, in which more than 43 people were killed and 37 were injured. Government officials were later accused of corruption in connection with the incident. The accident sparked local protests (cf. BN of 30.05.22).⁷

Israel / Palestinian Autonomous Territories

Public annexation plans / violence in the West Bank

On 21.03.25, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz made his first public statement indicating that the annexation of territories in the Gaza Strip would be seen as an option unless the remaining 59 Israeli hostages are released. The statement read: "The longer Hamas refuses to release the hostages, the more territory it will lose, which will then be annexed by Israel." This was the first time such a demand had been made by a key cabinet member, who is also considered to be a close ally of the prime minister.

On 23.03.25, the Security Cabinet also approved the establishment of 13 further settlements in the West Bank as independent municipalities, which represents an interim step towards their final legalisation. The move has been sharply criticised by the international community and by the Palestinian Authority.

The violence between members of the settler movement and Palestinian communities continues; the same applies to the Israeli army's counter-terrorism operations. Between 11.03.25 and 17.03.25, UN OCHA documented five deaths among Palestinians and one death of an Israeli settler in a total of more than 30 security-related incidents, ranging from physical attacks and arson to attacks on Israeli military personnel. It documented that in the vast majority of cases, the violence was clearly perpetrated by Israeli settlers.⁸

Situation in Gaza

On 18.03.25, fighting in Gaza resumed on the part of the Israeli armed forces. Hamas and Israel are accusing each other of violating the ceasefire agreement, according to which, among other things, indirect negotiations on an end to the war should already have begun, and half of the remaining hostages should have been released at the beginning of the second phase of the ceasefire.

The Israeli military's strikes are currently visibly aimed at weakening Hamas' ability to rule in the Gaza Strip. Several high-ranking members of the Hamas administration are said to have been killed, including the head of the Gaza administration, Issam al-Da'alis. On 20.03.25, Hamas again responded by launching untargeted rocket attacks on Israel, which were, however, intercepted by the Israeli military.

According to the Hamas-run Ministry of Health in Gaza, the number of Gaza residents killed since 07.10.23 has now surpassed 50,000. The Ministry of Health does not differentiate between civilians and fighters killed.⁹

Lebanon

Fragile ceasefire with Israel

According to Lebanese media reports, Israeli airstrikes and exchanges of fire continue at the border. On 22.03.25, rockets were fired from Lebanon at the Israeli village of Metula for the second time since the ceasefire began.

The rockets were intercepted, but Israel responded by launching several waves of airstrikes against Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. At least six people are said to have been killed. Hezbollah has denied any involvement in the rocket attack on Israel, while no other group has claimed responsibility yet. Domestically, there has been both support for and harsh criticism of Hezbollah, as, in accordance with the rules of the ceasefire, it should be disarming, destroying its infrastructure and withdrawing to the north of the Litani River.¹⁰

Lebanon / Syria

Ceasefire after several days of fighting on the Syrian-Lebanese border

Heavy fighting broke out between Lebanese and Syrian security forces along the Syrian-Lebanese border near the Lebanese town of Hermel and the Syrian village of al-Qusayr on 16.03.25 and 17.03.25 (cf. the section on Lebanon in the BN of 17.03.25).

On 17.03.25, the Lebanese and Syrian leaders reached a ceasefire and agreed to intensify coordination and cooperation between the two countries.¹¹

Libya

UNSMIL alarmed by nationwide wave of arrests

In a statement released on 22.03.25, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) expressed concern about the wave of arbitrary arrests and detentions being carried out by law enforcement and security actors across Libya. These actors are using their powers of arrest and detention "to target individuals for their alleged political affiliations, to silence perceived dissent and to undermine judicial independence." According to UNSMIL, these unlawful practices create a climate of fear and erode the rule of law.¹²

Myanmar

Security situation

Between 01.01.25 and 14.03.25, the NGO Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) documented 3,311 deaths nationwide in connection with the civil war between the Myanmar armed forces (Tatmadaw) and non-state armed groups, whereby ACLED does not distinguish between civilian deaths and fighter deaths. The highest number of deaths was recorded in the regions of Magway (796), Mandalay (465) and Sagaing (546), the state of Shan (347), the regions of Bago (262) and Tanintharyi (235) and the state of Rakhine (224). These regions and states are also the parts of the country in which the majority of incidents involving civilians as the main or only target were recorded during the same period. Since the beginning of 2025, the conflict between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army in Rakhine, where political violence increased by 64 percent in February 2025 compared to the previous month, has spread to the neighbouring regions of Ayeyarwady, Bago and Magway. The situation in the conflict areas in the northeast, southeast and northwest of the country remains tense.

This means that 13 of Myanmar's 15 states and regions are affected by ongoing fighting. At the same time, the Tatmadaw is intensifying its air campaign through the increasing use of motorised parachutes, which enables more precise attacks to be carried out at lower costs. Most recently, airstrikes carried out in the townships of Singu (Mandalay) and Nawngkhio (Shan) on 14.03.25 and 16.03.25 are said to have killed a total of 40 civilians and injured around 50 others. According to UN OCHA, the number of internally displaced persons is 3.5 million (as of February 2025).¹³

Humanitarian situation

According to UN figures, over 15 million people were affected by acute food insecurity at the end of February 2025, and two million people were at risk of famine. Almost half of the population lives below the poverty line. As a result of conflict and the climate crisis, agricultural productivity has fallen by 16 percent since 2021. Inflation reached 25.4 percent in 2024. In acutely contested areas, prices rose by between 40 and 50 percent, and in Rakhine it actually rose by 200 percent. Fifty-two percent of the population had no access to electricity in 2024. Since mid-2024, there have been increasing reports of people affected by poverty selling their kidneys to illegal organ brokers. Meanwhile, the US government's cuts to aid programmes are already having an impact on the supply of food and water as well as essential medicines, including for the treatment of HIV and tuberculosis both in Myanmar and in refugee camps in Thailand.¹⁴

Niger

Tillabéri region: attack on mosque

According to media reports, an armed attack was carried out on a mosque during a Friday prayer service held in the town of Fambita in the Tillabéri region in the southwest of the country on 21.03.25, reportedly killing 44 people and injuring at least 13. According to the Ministry of the Interior, the heavily armed assailants surrounded the mosque and carried out an armed assault of unusual cruelty. The attackers are also said to have set fire to a local market and homes. The Nigerien transitional government declared three days of national mourning. The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) group is suspected of being behind the attack. The Tillabéri region borders Mali and Burkina Faso and is considered to be a stronghold of jihadist groups that have been carrying out attacks there for years.¹⁵

Nigeria

Deadly military airstrikes in the north

In mid-March 2025, the Nigerian Air Force killed a large number of officially designated terrorists in airstrikes carried out in the northwestern state of Katsina and the northeastern state of Borno. According to media reports, the number of people killed in Katsina State in a single airstrike targeting violent gang camps is said to be over 20. It is claimed that many people were killed in the operations carried out in Borno State. The airstrikes are said to have delivered a crushing blow to the structures of violent groups in both regions, which are officially described as terrorist networks. Important leaders of these groups were also among those killed. In 2024, events associated with violent actors in both regions, including kidnappings, attacks and government countermeasures, were widely reported in the media (cf. BN of 29.07.24, 19.08.24, 09.09.24, 18.11.24 and 16.12.24).¹⁶

Abia State: police free kidnap victims

Police forces in Osisioma Ngwa Local Government Area in the southeastern state of Abia managed to free four men kidnapped on 09.03.25 from the clutches of their kidnappers. This has been reported in the media based on official statements issued by the police. Six kidnappers were killed during the rescue operation, but the kidnap victims were unharmed. The police confiscated two assault rifles and ammunition. The report does not contain any information about the identity of the kidnappers or the victims. In southeast Nigeria, acts of violence hit the headlines fairly regularly (cf. BN of 23.12.24 and 03.03.25). In addition to groups that are in favour of the secession of large parts of southeastern Nigeria from the state as a whole, other violent actors have also emerged in the region (cf. BN of 11.11.24).¹⁷

Rivers State: state of emergency declared

On 18.03.25, President Bola Tinubu declared a state of emergency in the oil-rich southern Nigerian Rivers State and suspended the governor, his deputy and all members of the state parliament for six months. According to media reports, Nigeria's parliament approved the measure on 20.03.25. This move can be attributed to reports detailing incidents of vandalism of pipelines by some militants. According to media reports, Tinubu accuses politicians in Rivers State of taking little action to curtail such incidents. Observers are concerned about the prospect of an escalating political crisis in the wake of these developments.¹⁸

Pakistan

Torkham border crossing reopened; departure deadline for migrants without a recognised residence permit

Since 19.03.25, the Afghan-Pakistani border crossing at Torkham has been open again, having been closed for almost a month. It is located in the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where frequent clashes erupt between militants and Pakistani security forces. The border crossing has been closed several times in recent years, mainly following clashes that erupted between security forces for reasons including Pakistan's repairs of the border fence.

On 31.03.25, the deadline announced by the Pakistani government for migrants living in the country without a recognised residence permit will expire, which will particularly affect individuals of Afghan origin. According to the Afghan embassy in Pakistan, an increasing number of Afghan nationals have already been arrested in Islamabad and nearby Rawalpindi for deportation purposes.

Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Sadiq Khan, is currently on a two-day official visit to Kabul to discuss bilateral issues with the de facto Taliban government.¹⁹

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: military operations in several districts

On 20.03.25, a gunbattle broke out during an operation carried out by Pakistani security forces in the Dera Ismail district, according to the military, that left an army captain and 10 militants dead. These were labelled as "Khwarij", a term the government uses for Pakistani Taliban, who are known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. A hideout of militants was also unearthed in Mohmand district.

On the night of 23.03.25, sixteen militants were killed in a military operation carried out in North Waziristan, according to army sources.²⁰

Peru

Security situation: state of emergency declared in Lima und Callao

On 17.03.25, the government issued a decree imposing a state of emergency in Lima and Callao for an initial period of 30 days to tackle the persistently high crime rates and following several security-related incidents that occurred between 14.03.25 and 16.03.25, some of which had fatal consequences for civilians. As part of this, a number of civil liberties (for example, freedom of movement and freedom of assembly) have been suspended and police powers (for instance, searches and arrests without a warrant) have been extended. It was also announced that additional security forces and soldiers would be deployed to support the police, for example at bus stations. In 2024, the number of violent homicides rose by around 35 percent compared to the previous year from a low level by regional standards, with over 2,050 homicides recorded in total (6.0 per 100,000 inhabitants). There were 22,800 extortion complaints filed by citizens last year. According to the National Police (PNP), the number of homicides between 01.01.25 and 16.03.25 reached almost 460. Opposition MPs announced a vote of no confidence in the incumbent Interior Minister Juan José Santiváñez amid what they saw as his inadequate security measures. His impeachment was approved in Congress on 21.03.25. There had already been a state of emergency in place in Lima and Callao for several months from September 2024 (cf. BN of 30.09.24), but according to people with specialist expertise, the outcome remained manageable.²¹

Russia

New prison sentences for people critical of the war

On 21.03.25, the St. Petersburg dissident Alexander Skobov was sentenced to 16 years in prison and a fine of RUB 300,000 (approximately EUR 3,270 as of 21.03.25) for justifying terrorism under Article 205.2 para. 2 of the Criminal Code (CC) and participating in a terrorist organisation under Article 205.4 para. 2 of the Criminal Code.

Skobov had reportedly published two posts on the internet in which he discussed the necessity of the Ukrainian attack on the Crimean Bridge, among other things, and had taken part in a video conference organised by the Free Russia Forum (FSR), a platform founded by Russian opposition activists in exile. According to OVD-Info, since 2012, proceedings have been instituted in 451 cases under Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code for public incitement or justification of terrorism based on political motivation.

Previously, two people in exile had already been sentenced to prison for spreading false information about the armed forces under Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code. On 05.03.25, the Zadneprovsky District Court of Smolensk sentenced an entrepreneur who had replaced 16 price tags with anti-war leaflets in his supermarket in 2022 to five years' imprisonment in absentia. On 06.03.25, the Kuntsevsky District Court in Moscow sentenced Elena Filina in absentia to eight years' imprisonment for a post published on her Facebook page in April 2022 that criticised Russian war crimes in Bucha and Irpin. According to OVD-Info, 362 cases have been reported since 2022 in which criminal proceedings under Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code have been instituted against opponents of the war.²²

Harassment of imprisoned war critics

According to media reports, the artist Lyudmila Razumova, who has been imprisoned since April 2022, was transferred to a prison hospital on 20.03.25 due to her state of health. Previously, following a 13-day hunger strike immediately after serving her prior sentence in a punishment cell, Razumova had been sentenced again to two weeks of solitary confinement on flimsy grounds, according to Novaya Gazeta. After posting anti-war graffiti, Razumova was sentenced to seven years in prison in March 2023 for spreading false information about the armed forces under Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code and vandalism under Article 214 of the Criminal Code. According to media reports, political prisoners are subjected to particularly harsh prison conditions compared to other detainees, such as frequent solitary confinement.²³

South Sudan

Temporary closure of the German embassy due to the threat of civil war

According to reports published on 22.03.25, the German government has decided to close the German embassy in Juba for security reasons. The joint transitional government formed in 2020 by President Salva Kiir Mayardit and his political opponent and Vice President Riek Machar is reportedly now in danger of failing due to political rivalries. Fighting by the "White Army" against the soldiers of the South Sudanese army in Upper Nile state led to the arrests of allies of Riek Machar (cf. BN of 17.03.25).

According to UN figures, 50,000 people have already become refugees.²⁴

Sudan

Recapture of the presidential palace in Khartoum by the SAF

According to recent media reports, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) recaptured the presidential palace in Khartoum, among other gains, from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on 21.03.25. The RSF militia had captured the palace and the city of Khartoum shortly after the outbreak of war in April 2023. This represents a significant success for the army in the fight against the RSF, which only in February announced the establishment of a parallel government (cf. BN of 24.02.25). The SAF had already achieved other major successes in recent months with the capture of Wad Madani in Gezira state and El Obeid in North Kordofan. The RSF militia is reported to have announced that the battle for the presidential palace was not yet over and that they would continue to fight to recapture the areas now under SAF control.²⁵

Multiple deaths in RSF attack in al-Malha

According to recent reports, the RSF militia killed 45 civilians in an attack on the town of al-Malha (North Darfur) on 20.03.25. The RSF, however, announced that they had killed over 380 people. Furthermore, the militia claimed to have captured the town, wresting control away from the SAF. The SAF confirmed that fighting had taken place, but not that they had lost control of al-Malha.²⁶

Syria

Aid pledges for the Syrian population at donor conference

As part of the first donor conference on Syria organised by the EU since the change of power, aid of more than EUR 5.8 billion was pledged on 17.03.25 to support the transitional government in humanitarian and security matters.

EUR 2.5 billion is to be provided by the EU in 2025 and 2026. Germany intends to contribute an additional EUR 300 million through the UN and partner organisations. Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Türkiye are also to be supported by these funds.

Not least due to the lack of US aid, the total amount remained below the level of the previous year's conference of EUR 7.5 billion. According to the head of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Syria's development has been set back by 40 years as a result of the long-standing conflict and will need at least 10 years to return to pre-war levels.²⁷

Israeli airstrikes on targets in Syria

According to media reports, three people were killed and 19 others wounded, including civilians, in Israeli airstrikes on targets in Dar'a city on 17.03.25. The Israeli military claimed to have targeted military sites and weapons and equipment depots that the new Syrian military is trying to utilise. Since the fall of the Assad regime, Israel has repeatedly bombed targets on Syrian territory.

The Israeli military is occupying areas in southern Syria along the Golan Heights, is demanding the demilitarisation of the entire south of Syria and has recently presented itself publicly as the protector of Syria's Druze minority.²⁸

Türkiye

Arrest and dismissal of Istanbul's mayor

On 19.03.25, Ekrem İmamoğlu of the Kemalist, social democratic Republican People's Party (CHP), mayor of the metropolitan municipality of Istanbul, was arrested along with over 100 other people from the worlds of politics, journalism and business.

He is accused of corruption and supporting the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). He was remanded in custody on 23.03.25 and suspended as mayor. The University of Istanbul had previously revoked his degree on 18.03.25, meaning that he was no longer allowed to stand as a presidential candidate. His lawyers announced that they would take legal action. In addition, a construction company in which he is involved was confiscated. Despite his arrest, the CHP elected İmamoğlu as their presidential candidate for 2028 by a large majority on 23.03.25.

The government banned demonstrations in Istanbul and other cities, closed roads and restricted social media. Nevertheless, mass protests have been taking place since 19.03.25. According to the authorities, over 700 people had been arrested by 23.03.25. The police used tear gas and water cannons, and numerous demonstrators and police officers were injured. The media reported violence against journalists. Security forces carried out raids in which 11 journalists, including an AFP correspondent, were arrested.

İmamoğlu rejected the accusations as politically motivated and declared that the people had "had enough" of Erdoğan. The president, in turn, condemned the protests and accused the CHP of dividing the country. One year after the local elections that were held on 31.03.24, six of the 27 CHP mayors in the greater Istanbul area have now been arrested.²⁹

Ukraine

Efforts for a ceasefire

According to media reports, during a telephone conversation between Presidents Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin on 18.03.25, the US reportedly sought a pause in attacks on energy infrastructure targets on the condition that Ukraine would do the same. It was reported that in response, President Volodymyr Zelensky voiced his support for a temporary halt to attacks on the energy supply. According to the Kremlin, Putin gave the order to halt the attacks on Ukrainian energy facilities after the telephone call. A general ceasefire had reportedly not been agreed. It was reported that negotiations on a ceasefire in the Black Sea are planned, however. It was reportedly also agreed that the two sides would exchange 175 prisoners of war each on 19.03.25. In the process, 23 seriously injured Ukrainian soldiers were also transferred. According to the Kremlin, during the phone call, Putin demanded an end to military and intelligence support for Ukraine by the US and its allies as a condition for a complete ceasefire. According to reports, Western and Ukrainian political commentaries and analyses see the phone call as a defeat for Trump. The reports state that Putin is playing for time and Trump could become the Russian president's accomplice. Reportedly, only Moscow's statement referred to the Russian conditions for a complete ceasefire, but not Washington's statement. According to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Putin's demands are tantamount to a "Ukrainian capitulation".

In a phone call between Presidents Trump and Zelensky that took place on 19.03.25, the first conversation since the altercation in the White House, the US President reportedly proposed the takeover of Ukrainian power plants by the US. According to Zelensky, however, they only discussed one power plant – the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

Meanwhile, according to media reports published on 19.03.25, President Putin has made further demands of Ukraine. The reports state that Ukraine must recognise the loss of Crimea and the regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. They add that if Ukraine fulfils Russia's present demands quickly, Russia will not lay claim to Odesa and other regions.

According to media reports, further bilateral talks between the US and Ukraine and between the US and the Russian Federation (RF) at expert level have been announced for 23.03.25 and 24.03.25 in Riyadh. For Zelensky, the talks will reportedly focus initially on the ceasefire limited to energy facilities, with the Ukrainian President emphasising the importance of including civilian infrastructure. Lists of infrastructure objects that fall under the heading of civilian infrastructure are reportedly being prepared in order to avoid misunderstandings. According to the Kremlin, the US-Russian negotiations should primarily focus on an initiative for safe shipping in the Black Sea with regard to the safe transport of grain.³⁰

Civilian casualties and UN report on crimes against humanity

According to media reports, one person was killed in airstrikes in Kupiansk (Kharkiv region) on 19.03.25. According to reports, one person was killed in Russian attacks in each of the Kherson and Dnipropetrovsk regions on 20.03.25. According to media reports published on 22.03.25, two people were killed the previous day in Russian attacks in Zaporizhzhia and Krasnopillya (Sumy region), respectively, and one person was killed in Kostyantynivka (Donetsk region). According to the governor, three civilians were killed in Pokrovsk (Donetsk region) on 22.03.25. Ukrainian authorities report at least seven dead in Kyiv after Russian attacks carried out on 23.03.25.

According to current UN data, the Russian Federation has committed crimes against humanity in Ukraine, specifically enforced disappearances and torture. According to media reports published on 14.03.25 and 19.03.25, the UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on the war in Ukraine reports a "large-scale and systematic attack on the civilian population". It states that the crimes were "committed as part of a state-coordinated policy [...] in all provinces of Ukraine where areas were brought under Russian control". According to the report, the Russian authorities targeted people whom they perceived as a threat or who refused to co-operate with them. It says civilians were arrested and taken to detention centres in the occupied territories or in the Russian Federation. It states that there, some of them were subjected to torture and sexualised violence. It says that many victims are missing. Some have reportedly died in captivity. The report adds that the Russian Federation has also failed to report the whereabouts of missing persons. With reference to a report published by the UN Human Rights Office, media coverage indicates that at least 669 children were killed and a further 1,833 injured in the period from 24.02.22 to 31.12.24. According to this report, a total of 89 percent were killed by large-area explosive weapons. Forty children were reportedly killed by mines and unexploded ordnance.

The report further states that the UN Human Rights Office has also received credible reports that Ukrainian minors were enticed to commit acts of sabotage with money. Everything reportedly points to those responsible having links to the Russian Federation. With reference to reports issued by the Ukrainian public prosecutor's office, at least 11 young people between the ages of 13 and 17 have reportedly been arrested in connection with acts of sabotage. The reports say they were contacted via social media and encouraged, for example, to set fire to vehicles belonging to Ukrainian military personnel or to railway installations. They were reportedly promised money if they recorded video evidence of their actions.³¹

War events

According to media reports published on 18.03.25, which refer to unconfirmed information from the Russian Ministry of Defence, Russian troops have broken through Ukrainian defence lines approximately 50 km southeast of the city of Zaporizhzhia. The reports say that the Ukrainian side has stated that the fighting is still ongoing.³²

Energy infrastructure

Following the telephone conversation between Presidents Trump and Putin, there were further Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy and civilian infrastructure, according to media reports published on 19.03.25. According to these reports, the city of Sloviansk (Donetsk region) was partially cut off from the power grid following damage to the electricity supply. A hospital in Sumy was reportedly also hit, as was the energy infrastructure of the state railways in the Dnipropetrovsk region. Russian drone attacks on Odesa carried out on 20.03.25 reportedly caused damage to civilian infrastructure and power cuts in some parts of the city. According to media reports published on 19.03.25, the Russian side in turn pointed to Ukrainian drone attacks on Russian oil infrastructure. According to the reports, both warring parties accused each other of undermining the agreement to temporarily cease attacks on energy infrastructure.³³

Russian decree on the residence status of Ukrainian citizens

According to reports, President Putin issued a decree on 20.03.25 in which he calls on Ukrainian citizens living "in Russia without a residence permit" to "settle their legal status" by 10.09.25. This will reportedly put pressure on Ukrainian citizens in the Russian Federation and in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine to take on Russian citizenship. According to the reports, this will force Ukrainian citizens who refuse Russian passports and citizenship to leave the occupied territories, for example. The reports add that Ukraine has reported this illegal practice to the International Criminal Court.³⁴

Venezuela

FFM and UNHCHR updates before the UN Human Rights Council

On 18.03.25, the UN-mandated Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela (FFM) pointed out in its report to the Human Rights Council that there is still evidence of the state's use of "persecution for political reasons" in Venezuela. The FFM also criticised the numerous documented cases of arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances between September 2024 and January 2025. An update from the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) dated 20.03.25 also addresses the economic, humanitarian and medical situation in the country: it states that around 7.6 million people are still in need of humanitarian aid. It further states that reports on the "shortage of essential medicines and medical consumables", which patients still often have to provide themselves for treatment, continue, as do reports on the unaffordable cost of medicines for most patients. It mentions that there have also been reports of salaries being suspended in the public sector and redundancies (for example, of teaching staff). The statement also refers to ongoing reports of torture and the withholding of medical treatment in detention, as well as restrictions on freedom of expression and the activities of NGOs.

On 19.03.25, a Venezuelan NGO also published a letter from, among others, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders addressed to the Venezuelan government, which back in December 2024 had criticised the alleged cancellation of passports of human rights defenders for political reasons and demanded information on the legal basis for this and the exact number of people affected, among other things.³⁵

Yemen

Missile attacks on Israel / airstrikes launched by the US

The US airstrikes launched against targets in Yemen continue unabated (cf. BN of 17.03.25). According to the US National Security Advisor, several important leaders of the Houthis militia have been killed and key military capabilities destroyed. The Houthis have not confirmed any of this information. The extent of the damage is currently difficult to assess.

On 20.03.25, Houthi forces again launched ballistic missile attacks on Israel. Until the evening of 23.03.25, air raid sirens sounded repeatedly in Israel and the West Bank, with the target allegedly being Ben Gurion International Airport.³⁶

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Briefing Notes
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