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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Briefing Notes are issued each Monday and include media coverage until Friday of the preceding week.

18 May 2026

Albania

Further clashes during opposition protests

Media reports indicated renewed clashes during protests by the Albanian opposition in Tirana on 8 May 2026. According to these reports, there were clashes with the police and the use of Molotov cocktails by demonstrators; security forces deployed tear gas and water cannons. Since December 2025, the Albanian opposition, led by the chairman of the Democratic Party, Sali Berisha, has been organising repeated protests (see BN of 26 January 2026). According to media reports, allegations of corruption against Edi Rama's government are at the heart of the protests. The demonstrators called for his resignation and new elections.¹

Suspected case of blood feud in the Lezha administrative unit

On 26 April 2026, according to media reports, a married couple were killed in an armed attack involving more than 30 shots in the Lezha administrative unit. According to official police statements, the incident was an act of revenge. According to media reports and statements by representatives of the National Reconciliation Committee for the Mediation of Blood Feud Conflicts, the incident is linked to an unsolved blood feud from 2016. There is a suspicion that this is a case of blood feud.²

Bangladesh

Freedom of the press

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2026, the human rights organisation Justice Makers Bangladesh in France criticised the ongoing "intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests and unjustified detentions" of media workers across the country. Several journalists who were arrested in 2024 without warrants for carrying out their professional duties and charged under the transitional government remain in custody. Kamal Ahmed, head of the Media Reform Commission, reported at an event marking World Press Freedom Day that media professionals were regularly subjected to harassment and were particularly

vulnerable to it in towns at district and upazila level. Television journalist Shahnaz Munni also expressed concern about the declining proportion of women in the industry. This trend was also attributable to a lack of safety on the ground, as well as to online hate campaigns and workplace harassment. In the Press Freedom Index compiled by the NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Bangladesh fell three places in 2026 to 152nd out of 180 countries. According to RSF, media workers in Bangladesh are exposed to “police violence, attacks by party supporters and staged murders by jihadist or mafia networks”. Whilst these crimes go unpunished, a repressive cybersecurity law remains in force. The new government’s bill, passed on 10 April 2026 and intended to replace the draconian cybersecurity law of 2024, retains vague provisions such as “spreading chaos” and “spreading fear”. According to media and NGO reports, these are “subjectively interpreted and frequently abused” and lead, among other things, to self-censorship and arrests for social media posts.³

Burkina Faso

Dissolution of dozens of civil society organisations

On 5 May 2026, the Burkinabe military junta, led by Head of State Ibrahim Traoré, announced the suspension of over 200 NGOs and civil society groups. According to media reports, this brings the total number of organisations that have been closed down or dissolved by the junta since April 2026 to over 900. Those affected include organisations working in the fields of health, education, women’s rights, agriculture, the environment, culture and sport. Back in April 2026, the military junta had already ordered the dissolution of more than 100 civil society organisations (see BN, 20 April 2026). Since seizing power in a coup in 2022, the military government has, according to media reports, been cracking down on NGOs, trade unions, freedom of assembly and members of the opposition, amongst others. International NGOs have in the past been accused of espionage or collaboration with jihadist groups. In July 2025, a law restricting the work of civil society organisations was introduced under the pretext of administrative regulations. On 29 January 2026, following a three-year suspension, the Council of Ministers of the Burkinabe military government dissolved all political parties by decree (see BN, 2 February 2026).⁴

Chad / Nigeria

Security situation following Boko Haram attacks

Members of the Islamist group Boko Haram killed at least 26 Chadian soldiers and injured 26 others in two attacks targeting a military base and several military boats on Lake Chad on 4 May and 6 May 2026 in the province of

Lac in the west of the country, killing at least 26 Chadian soldiers and injuring a further 26. According to media reports citing information from the Chadian government, a “significant number” of Boko Haram fighters were also killed. In response to the attacks, the Chadian government has declared a 20-day state of emergency and stepped up its military operations. In the process, more than 40 Nigerian fishermen were reportedly killed on Nigerian territory following air strikes by the Chadian army targeting jihadists. This is said to have occurred because Boko Haram fighters had retreated to islands in Lake Chad that were inhabited by the fishermen. The Chadian government has rejected reports of the fishermen’s deaths but has offered to conduct an independent investigation into the incidents in cooperation with the UN, following the latter’s call for such an inquiry. The region around Lake Chad has long served as a refuge and base for Islamist groups such as Boko Haram or the IS offshoot Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Attacks on Chadian military personnel have occurred repeatedly in the past, most recently in October 2024, resulting in around 40 Chadian deaths. At that time, Nigerian civilians were also killed in counter-attacks by the Chadian army.⁵

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Security situation in eastern Congo: numerous deaths in militia attack

At least 69 people, the majority of them civilians, have been killed in attacks by the Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO) on several villages in Ituri province in the north-east of the country. According to media reports, the militia's attacks took place as early as 28 April 2026. The attacks were reportedly in retaliation for assaults by the armed group Convention pour la Révolution Populaire (CRP) on positions of the Congolese Army (FARDC) in the village of Pimbo in the Djugu Territory on the morning of the same day.

CODECO, which has several thousand members, claims to defend the interests of the Lendu ethnic group against the Hema group, which is associated with the CRP. Recently, CRP raids on villages in the Djugu area have been reported almost daily. Since February 2026, more than 100,000 people have been displaced in the region. In response to the precarious security situation, MONUSCO and the FARDC are said to have recently strengthened their presence in the Djugu and Irumu areas. On 14 May 2026, the CRP leadership under Thomas Lubanga announced a unilateral ceasefire, which was to come into effect on 15 May 2026. Furthermore, the militia announced its intention to join the ongoing peace process with the Congolese government.⁶

Security situation in eastern Congo: M23 withdrawal in South Kivu

Under pressure from the US, the M23 in South Kivu began withdrawing from several areas near the town of Uvira on 9 May 2026. According to several media reports, the Rwandan-backed militia withdrew to the village of Luvungi, 65 km north of Uvira. After the M23 had captured Uvira on 10 December 2025 and completely vacated it on 17 January 2026 (see BN of 15 December 2025 and 26 January 2026), the militia claims to have withdrawn to the positions it held in early December 2025, prior to the capture of the town.

On 13 May 2026, HRW published its investigation into human rights violations during the occupation of Uvira. In its report, the NGO accuses the M23 and Rwandan troops of several war crimes. It states that it has documented 53 cases of summary executions, the majority of which took place on 10 December 2025, the day the militia entered the town. On the same day, seven men were reportedly abducted from their homes and have been missing ever since. Furthermore, the NGO reports cases of sexual violence, rape, abductions and the forced recruitment of civilians.⁷

El Salvador

Situation of media professionals

According to media reports, on 7 May 2026 the assets of two shareholders and co-founders of the independent Salvadoran newspaper El Faro were frozen. The newspaper has reportedly been in exile in Costa Rica since April 2023. This is reminiscent of previously reported incidents targeting media professionals in El Salvador (see BN of 14 July, 21 July and 20 October 2025). According to the incumbent president, Nayib Bukele, money laundering investigations have been ongoing against the news agency since 2020. Before taking office, Bukele had sought to buy the newspaper. Shortly after assuming the presidency in 2019, however, El Faro published an article exposing alleged collusion between Bukele and illegal gangs. As early as January 2022, El Faro reported that 22 staff members had been bugged 226 times using the Pegasus spyware. According to the latest report by the Salvadoran Journalists' Association (APES), at least 50 media workers were forced to leave the country in 2025. A total of 426 attacks on media workers were recorded, the majority of which were carried out by the state.⁸

Iran

Ongoing executions

According to media reports, a man was executed in Karaj on 13 May 2026 who had been arrested in the town of Malard during the nationwide protests in January 2026. He is alleged to have killed a police officer during the unrest in Malard, west of Tehran, and to have been convicted of enmity against God (Persian: Moharebeh). The executed man's defence lawyer stated that the Supreme Court had barred him and another independent lawyer from representing the defendant in court. These details cannot be independently verified.

The death sentence was also carried out on another man on 13 May 2026. According to press reports, he was accused of espionage and collaboration with the Israeli intelligence service Mossad. The man is said to have been arrested upon his return from Turkey at the beginning of 2024.

Media reports indicated a further execution on 11 May 2026. A person was reportedly executed for alleged collaboration with the US intelligence service CIA and the Israeli Mossad, having been arrested in February 2025. He is said to have passed on confidential information relating to satellite projects to the intelligence services. According to press reports, the judiciary and security apparatus did not disclose any details regarding the court proceedings, the defendant's access to an independent lawyer, or the nature of the evidence. These details cannot be independently verified.

Various human rights organisations have repeatedly criticised the fact that death sentences based on security allegations are carried out in the Islamic Republic without a fair trial. Furthermore, a US-based think tank criticised in a press report on 15 May 2026 that many of these executions take place following expedited trials in which the defendants have little or no access to legal representation. Moreover, they are reportedly subjected to unfair trials and are often convicted on the basis of confessions extracted under torture. These claims cannot be independently verified.

According to media reports dated 14 April 2026, at least 32 prisoners have been executed since the outbreak of war between the US, Israel and Iran on the basis of political and security-related charges. Fourteen of those executed were put to death in connection with the nationwide protests of December 2025 and January 2026 alone.⁹

Iraq

New Prime Minister

On 14 May 2026, the Iraqi Parliament confirmed the majority candidate Ali al-Zaidi as the new Prime Minister (see BN of 11 May 2026). In a speech on the same day, he announced that he would only tolerate weapons in the hands of the state.

Armed groups, primarily Shia militias with close ties to Iran, have been undermining the state's monopoly on the use of force for some time. In addition to ongoing human rights violations by the militias, these groups are also causing significant destabilisation of the general security situation in Iraq. To date, no Iraqi government has succeeded in disarming the aforementioned groups.¹⁰

Iranian drone attacks

According to media reports, on 13 and 15 May 2026, the Iranian government carried out a total of five separate drone strikes on accommodation areas of the Iranian exile Democratic Party of Kurdistan-Iran (PDKI) north of Erbil. No casualties were reported. The latest attacks followed rocket attacks on the Iranian exile group Komala on 10 May 2026, also north-east of Erbil. Here too, no casualties were reported.

Since the start of the war with Iran at the end of February 2026, Iran has attacked Iranian-Kurdish opposition figures on Iraqi territory on around 130 occasions (see BN of 11 May 2026). The Iranian government classifies these groups as a security threat.¹¹

Lebanon

Fragile ceasefire

There continues to be daily cross-fire between Hezbollah and the Israeli armed forces. On 12 May 2026, the Israeli military announced that it had carried out a week-long ground operation north of the Litani River around the settlement of Zawtar al-Sharqiyya. A large number of Hezbollah fighters were reportedly killed in the course of this operation.

According to the Lebanese Ministry of Health, by 15 May 2026 there had been a total of 2,951 confirmed fatalities on the Lebanese side, with no distinction made between combatants and civilians.

On 15 May 2006, Lebanon and Israel agreed to extend the ceasefire by a further 45 days; the previous one would have expired on 17 May 2006. The ceasefire explicitly excludes attacks on Hezbollah's infrastructure, provided that such infrastructure is being used to prepare for attacks on Israel.¹²

Mali

Central Mali: Civilian deaths in attacks on villages

According to media reports, several attacks resulting in numerous deaths are said to have taken place in central Mali. Jihadist groups are reported to have attacked two villages (Kori Kori and Gomossogou) in the Mopti region on 6 May 2026, killing over 30 people. Following further attacks on the villages of Kouroude and Dougara, the death toll is said to have risen to 70. The jihadist group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) has claimed responsibility for the attacks. It is suspected that the jihadists attacked these villages because they had refused to sign local agreements. Following the devastating attacks on 25 April 2026 (see BN, 4 May 2026), the security situation in the country has deteriorated further and several areas in the north of the country are now under the control of armed groups.¹³

Mauretania

Two opposition MPs sentenced to four years' imprisonment

According to media reports, on 4 May 2026 a court in Nouakchott found the two female MPs, Ghamou Achour and Mariem Cheikh Dieng, guilty of "defamation", "making threats", "inciting violence" and disseminating content that undermines "national symbols" and "social cohesion". They were sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

The two MPs belong to the opposition party coalition Sawab/Refondation pour une Action Globale (RAG), the political wing of the Initiative pour la Résurgence du Mouvement Abolitionniste (IRA). They were reportedly detained on 21 April 2026 after having previously strongly criticised Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani and the government in live broadcasts on social media. In passing the sentence, the Public Prosecutor's Office invoked the legal principle of 'flagrante delicto' to justify the circumvention of their parliamentary immunity; no due process was initiated in this regard.

The IRA, founded in 2008 by the multiple presidential candidate Biram Dah Abeid, is primarily committed to the fight against traditional and modern forms of slavery, as well as the rights of historically disadvantaged, dark-skinned population groups in Mauritania. Abeid described the verdict as "unjust" and sees it as a targeted move against his militant organisation, which – unlike under his predecessor Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz – has so far been able to operate relatively freely since President Ghazouani took office in 2019. Those members and supporters of the IRA who were arrested and charged in February 2026 in connection with a scandal surrounding the uncovering of an alleged case of slavery (see BN, 9 March 2026) therefore remain in custody.¹⁴

Nigeria

Zamfara State: Military strike kills dozens of civilians

On 10 May 2026, members of the Nigerian military killed more than 100 civilians in an airstrike on a market in the village of Tumfa, in the Zurmi Local Government Area (LGA) in the north-western state of Zamfara. According to media reports, dozens of people were injured. The majority of those killed were women and girls. The spokesperson for the Nigerian military is reported to have dismissed the reports of civilian casualties as untrue. On 11 April 2026, Nigerian military aircraft also killed dozens of civilians during air strikes on a market in the village of Jili in Yobe State (see BN, 20 April 2026).¹⁵

Pakistan

Security situation

On 9 May 2026, at least 14 security personnel were killed in D. I. Khan, in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), following a bomb attack on a police post and a subsequent exchange of fire. According to media reports, a militant group called Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen has claimed responsibility for the attack. On 11 May 2026, the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated that Afghanistan was responsible for harbouring militant fighters.

On 12 May 2026, at least nine people, including two police officers and a woman, were killed and more than two dozen others injured in an explosion at a market in Lakki Marwat (KP). No group claimed responsibility for the attack. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) denied any involvement.

Meanwhile, according to anonymous sources within the TTP, senior members of the group are said to have been instructed to relocate their residences in Kabul to a location south of the capital. Some TTP commanders are reported to have already left the Afghan capital, whilst others are said to be preparing to move. The Afghan Taliban have repeatedly denied harbouring the TTP, although they maintain close ideological, organisational and tribal links with it. Many members of both groups belong to the Pashtun ethnic group, who live on both sides of the 2,600-kilometre-long, porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁶

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Ultrnationalist flag march through the Old City of Jerusalem

According to media reports, on 14 May 2026, tens of thousands of ultra-nationalist Israeli youths marched through Jerusalem's Old City under heavy police protection during the "flag march" to mark Jerusalem Day. Racist slogans such as "Death to the Arabs" and "May your villages burn" were reportedly chanted repeatedly. Police Minister Itamar Ben Gvir waved an Israeli flag in front of the al-Aqsa Mosque and declared "the Temple Mount is in our hands". Jerusalem Day commemorates the conquest of East Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War, but today it is strongly influenced by the religious-Zionist movement.¹⁷

UN: 70 children killed in the West Bank since the start of 2025

On 12 May 2026, the UN reported on the number of Palestinian minors killed as a result of "escalating" Israeli military operations and settler violence in the West Bank. Since the start of 2025, 70 Palestinian minors have been killed and 850 injured. According to UNICEF, in March 2026 Israeli settlers injured more Palestinians than at any time in the last 20 years, following a historically unprecedented level of violence.¹⁸

Reports of systematic sexual violence

On 12 May 2026, an Israeli civilian commission published a 300-page report documenting systematic patterns of sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas during the attack on 7 October 2023. Based on witness statements, forensic evidence and visual documentation,

The report identifies 13 recurring, systematic patterns of violence – including persistent sexualised violence during captivity and the digital dissemination of the acts. Around 1,200 people were killed and over 250 abducted in the terrorist attack.

A day earlier, on 11 May 2026, the New York Times published an article on allegedly widespread sexual violence and abuse of Palestinian prisoners by Israeli security forces and settlers, which was picked up by local and international media. Drawing on witness accounts, the author writes of systematic and severe cases of sexual torture, abuse and humiliation in detention and during interrogations. There is no evidence that Israeli officials order rapes, but a climate of impunity created by the right-wing religious Israeli government is said to facilitate these attacks. The Israeli government strongly rejected the allegations and announced it would take legal action against the newspaper.¹⁹

Saudi Arabia / Ethiopia

Application of the death penalty against Ethiopian migrants

According to local reports, over 200 Ethiopian refugees, some of whom have been in custody in Khamis Mushait (Abaha region) for several years, face the death penalty. These are primarily refugees from Tigray who entered Saudi Arabia illegally and were detained on drug-related charges. 65 Ethiopian nationals are reportedly facing imminent execution, and the death penalty was reportedly carried out on three individuals as early as April 2026. Human rights organisations have repeatedly expressed concerns regarding poor detention conditions and alleged mistreatment in detention centres. There are approximately 750,000 Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabia; according to reports, half of them are believed to have entered the country illegally via Yemen. There have been violent clashes in the past between Saudi Arabian security forces and Ethiopian migrants. Between 2019 and 2024, people were repeatedly killed or injured whilst attempting to cross the border from Yemen.²⁰

Somalia

Security situation

According to media reports, fighting has been taking place since around 13 May 2026 between al-Shabaab and the Somali military near the town of Baidoa in the South West State of southern Somalia. Two military commanders and, allegedly, several al-Shabaab members were reportedly killed in the fighting. Furthermore, during the same period and also near Baidoa, security forces loyal to Abdiiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen, the former President of South West State who was deposed by the Somali Federal Government (see BN of 13 April 2026), are reported to have engaged in fighting with the Somali military. The number of dead and injured in this incident is as yet unknown. Furthermore, on 12 May 2026, the Somali military carried out an operation against al-Shabaab in Middle Shabelle in the central Somali state of Hirshabelle, during which several al-Shabaab members were killed and civilian hostages were freed.

According to various reports, clashes between two sub-clans of the Warsangeli in the Sanaag region of northern Somalia on 6 and 7 May 2026 resulted in at least 30 deaths, 30 injuries and the displacement of approximately 9,000 people. The cause of the conflict is said to have been access to water sources and grazing land against the backdrop of long-standing territorial disputes.²¹

Syria

WFP: Food aid halved and bread subsidies suspended for Syria

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) announced on 13 May 2026 that it had halved emergency aid for Syria due to funding shortfalls. The number of people in Syria receiving emergency aid in the form of The number of people receiving food aid is therefore expected to have fallen from 1.3 million to 650,000 by May 2026, whilst the relief operations, which had previously been carried out in all 14 governorates, have had to be scaled back to seven governorates. In addition, the WFP discontinued its bread subsidy programme, which had previously supported more than 300 bakeries and thereby provided subsidised bread to up to four million people daily in some of Syria's most vulnerable areas.

The WFP emphasised that the reduction in emergency aid was due solely to funding constraints and not to a decline in need.²²

Internally displaced persons in Hasaka: Return of 1,200 families to Afrin

On 9 May 2026, the fourth group since the signing of the agreement on 29 January 2026 between the transitional government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) returned to Afrin as part of an organised return programme, comprising around 1,200 families.

According to a media report citing information from the Aleppo Governorate, existing emergency accommodation – some of which has been standing empty in the meantime – is being made available to those who no longer have a home in Afrin.²³

Resumption of payments via MasterCard and Visa

On 9 May 2026, for the first time in more than 15 years, the Syrian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology conducted a test run with MasterCard and Visa from Syria. The Ministry also announced the launch of a local payment system called Paymera, which is linked to global payment networks and facilitates bank transfers between all banks operating in Syria as well as the Visa and MasterCard networks.²⁴

Hasaka: Two dead and several injured in IS attack on Syrian soldiers

The Syrian state news agency SANA reported on 11 May 2026 that two soldiers from the Syrian army were killed and others injured in an attack by unknown assailants on a military bus belonging to the 64th Division west of al-Aliyah in the Hasaka Governorate. The following day, IS claimed responsibility for the attack via its news agency Amaq.

In February 2026, IS declared a new phase in the fight against the transitional government and has since carried out several attacks, some of them deadly (see BN of 23 February and 2 March 2026). According to information from a Syrian human rights organisation dated 12 May 2026, the number of IS attacks in areas under the control of the transitional government has thus risen to 47 incidents since 17 February 2026. According to this, a total of 39 people are reported to have been killed in the attacks, including 31 members of the Syrian armed forces, four IS members and four civilians. The majority of the attacks reportedly took place in the Deir ez-Zor Governorate.²⁵

Quneitra: Arrest of several civilians by Israeli forces

According to the Syrian state news agency SANA, Israeli forces arrested a shepherd on 8 May 2026 after a convoy of six Israeli military vehicles had advanced towards the village of Sida al-Hanout.

According to a media report, on 11 May 2026 the Israeli army also set up a military checkpoint at the entrance to the town of Jubata al-Khashab and fired several artillery shells at agricultural land around the village of Taranja. There is no information available regarding casualties. Furthermore, media reports indicated that Israeli artillery shells struck the outskirts of the town of Hamidiyah and that several houses in the villages of Sida Golan and Kudna were searched on 14 May 2026, with the Israeli forces arresting one civilian in each instance.²⁶

Türkiye**Further arrests in CHP-led local councils; party defections; the “Böcek case”**

According to media reports, on 14 May 2026, arrest warrants were issued for 60 people linked to the CHP-led administration of the municipality of Tepebaşı in the province of Eskişehir. Among them were 33 municipal employees and 27 individuals from the private sector. The investigation concerns tax evasion, forgery, abuse of office, embezzlement and money laundering.

On 15 May 2026, according to media reports, 32 people were arrested in connection with allegations against CHP-led municipal administrations in the province of Denizli and in Istanbul. In connection with the investigations into the metropolitan administration, 22 arrests were made, seven in the Istanbul district of Üsküdar and 13 in the municipality of Merkezefendi in the province of Denizli. The accused are alleged to have committed corruption, bid-rigging and misconduct in the granting of building permits.

According to media reports, the mayor of Afyonkarahisar, together with a district mayor, switched to the AKP on 12 May 2026 after previously resigning from the CHP. With the additional resignation of seven members of the city council, the majority of seats will go to the AKP.

On 10 May 2026, the son of the imprisoned and deposed mayor of Antalya, Muhittin Böcek, testified at the Antalya Public Prosecutor's Office that, in order for Böcek to be re-nominated as a candidate, one million euros had been demanded via an intermediary by the CHP chairman, Özgür Özel. He then personally took this money to Ankara. On another occasion, Özel is said to have personally received a bag containing 200,000 USD during a visit to Antalya. Böcek confirmed his son's statement. According to media reports, Böcek and his son have applied for a reduced sentence on the grounds of active repentance. Critics fear that the trial against Böcek could pave the way for subsequent proceedings to ban the CHP. The alleged intermediary, a CHP MP from Malatya, has filed a criminal complaint against Böcek's son for defamation. In his speech at the CHP's parliamentary group meeting, Özel stated that Böcek's confession had been obtained through blackmail.²⁷

Arrest of suspected Gülenists

According to media reports, a total of 101 suspected Gülenists were arrested on 7 May and 12 May during raids in several provinces across the country.²⁸

Tunisia

Amnesty International: Dozens of NGOs threatened with dissolution following temporary suspension

After Tunisian authorities temporarily suspended the activities of dozens of NGOs from October 2025 onwards, citing investigations into alleged financial irregularities (see BN of 27 October 2025, 3 Nov 25, 27 Apr 26 and 11 May 26), these organisations now face dissolution, according to Amnesty International (AI). According to the report, some of the organisations concerned challenged the suspension orders in court, but all of them failed in their appeals. The authorities have now filed applications with the courts to dissolve at least two of the affected NGOs: the Al Khatt association, which runs the online media outlet Inkyfada, and the anti-racism association Mnemty, whose chairperson, Saadia Mosbah, was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment in March 2026 (see BN, 23 March 2026). The court hearing on this matter, scheduled for 11 May 2026, has reportedly been postponed to 1 June 2026.

Most recently, the Tunisian Organisation of Young Doctors (OTJM) announced in a statement on 14 May 2026 that the authorities had ordered a 30-day suspension of its activities.

The Coexistence with Alternative Language and Actions Movement (CALAM) published a statement on 6 May 2026 stating that, due to the temporary suspension of its partner organisation Avocats sans frontières (ASF), it is no longer able to continue providing legal support to victims of violence. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), hundreds of people rely on the free legal aid provided by ASF, which is the only organisation nationwide to offer this form of support.²⁹

Freedom of the press: Court of Appeal upholds prison sentences for media workers

According to media reports, the Tunis Court of Appeal confirmed on 12 May 2026 the three-and-a-half-year prison sentences handed down in January 2026 at first instance against the two journalists Mourad Zeghidi and Borhen Bssais for alleged money laundering and tax evasion (see BN of 26 January and 4 May 2026).

Human rights and press freedom organisations condemned the trial as "harassment" and view the judiciary's intensified crackdown on individual media professionals and civil society organisations in the media sector as a comprehensive strategy aimed at destroying the infrastructure of independent and critical journalism that has developed in Tunisia since the fall of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in 2011.³⁰

Ukraine

Civilian casualties, massive air strikes on the Ukrainian capital Kyiv

According to media reports, Russian attacks between 8 May and 15 May 2026 claimed numerous civilian lives in the following Ukrainian regions: 8 May (Chernihiv: 2); 9 May (Zaporizhzhia Oblast: 1), 11 May (Kherson

Oblast: 2; Zaporizhzhia Oblast: 1), 12 May (Kryvyi Rih: 2), 13 May (Dnipropetrovsk Oblast: 8, Rivne Oblast: 3; Kharkiv Oblast, Kherson Oblast: 1 each), 14 May/15 May (Kyiv: 24). Although there were reportedly numerous violations during the three-day unilateral ceasefire declared by the Russian Federation (RF) against the backdrop of the military parade to commemorate the Second World War on 9 May 2026, there were no large-scale waves of air strikes against Ukraine. On 9 May 2026, the Ukrainian Air Force reported the lowest number of drone attacks in months. However, fighting on the front line is said not to have ceased. According to media reports, since the ceasefire expired on 11 May 2026, the Russian Federation has been intensifying its air attacks on Ukraine in several large-scale waves. These are said to be the heaviest attacks in a long time, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries. The attacks are reportedly focused on civilian targets. According to Ukrainian sources, on 13 May 2026 the Russian Federation fired at least 800 drones at around 20 Ukrainian regions, including Kyiv, Odessa and Lviv. For the first time, the city of Uzhhorod in the Transcarpathian region, on the border with Hungary. This was described as the most massive drone attack on the region since the start of the invasion. The attacks also took place during the day. At least 24 civilians were reportedly killed during further two-day night-time attacks on the capital, Kyiv, on 14 and 15 May 2026 (see above). On 15 May 2026, reports indicated that a further 17 people were still missing in the rubble of a destroyed apartment block. According to the Ukrainian military, during the night-time attacks, the Russian Federation fired at least 675 drones and 56 missiles at Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities. Kharkiv, Odessa and Sumy were also heavily affected. The attacks targeted residential buildings and civilian infrastructure such as ports and railway facilities. President Zelenskyy described the wave of attacks as “terror” and called for “more painful” sanctions against the Russian Federation. The mayor of Kyiv declared 15 May 2026 a day of mourning.³¹

Venezuela

Human rights situation

According to media reports, on 7 May 2026 the government confirmed the death of the missing political prisoner Víctor Hugo Quero Navas, who had been sought for 16 months. He had reportedly died nine months earlier, on 24 July 2025, in a state detention centre. On 10 May 2026, another death in state custody was reported, that of former city councillor Manuel García Sabino. Both had been excluded from release under the temporary amnesty law.

According to a report by the NGO Provea, the number of people forcibly disappeared in Venezuela rose by 196% in 2025. 160 people fell victim to this crime in 2025, whereas in 2024 the figure was around 54. According to the NGO Foro Penal, around 700 new complaints regarding detentions and enforced disappearances were also received between 8 January and 1 February 2026. Furthermore, there are reports that the Venezuelan government under Maduro abducted and detained foreign nationals in order to use them as bargaining chips in negotiations with other states. According to Foro Penal, as of the end of April 2026, there were still at least 473 political prisoners and 40 foreign detainees in Venezuela, although the civil society organisation Justicia, Encuentro y Perdón estimates the figure to be 676 prisoners, including 187 military personnel and 34 foreign nationals.³²

Yemen

Prisoner exchange

On 14 May 2026, according to media reports, the Yemeni government and the Houthis agreed on a prisoner exchange involving more than 1,600 detainees. This is said to be the largest prisoner exchange since the start of the civil war in 2014. The Houthis are said to be releasing around 580 people, including an unknown number of media workers and politicians. For its part, the Yemeni government has pledged to release around 1,100 people.³³

IOM: Reconstruction of school buildings

On 14 May 2026, IOM reported that it had handed over a total of 12 construction sites for the reconstruction of schools in the governorates of Aden, Lahif and Taiz. Around 18,000 children are expected to benefit from this in future.

Due to the hostilities and the devastating humanitarian situation, public services have been severely affected; among other things, IOM estimates that around 2,800 schools in the country have been destroyed, leaving more than 4.5 million children out of school.³⁴

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Briefing Notes
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