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Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

11 August 2014

Afghanistan

Security situation

On 05 August 2014 a man in an Afghan uniform killed a US general, injured a German general and at least 14 ISAF soldiers. The assault happened in a military training centre near Kabul during the visit of an international military delegation. The body guards shot the assassin who probably was an Afghan soldier. 143 ISAF soldiers lost their lives and 181 were wounded since 2008 in so-called "green-on-blue attacks". Most attacks occurred in 2012 and they have become less and less frequent since then.

On 05 August 2014 a policeman killed seven of his colleagues in the provincial capital of Tarin Kot of the southern province of Uruzgan.

Also on 5 August 2014 Taliban fighters attacked Musa Qala district in the southern province of Helmand.

In the northern province of Kunduz ten policemen defected to the Taliban on 6 August 2014.

One person was killed and another one seriously wounded in a car bomb explosion on a Kabul market on 09 August 2014.

In a suicide attack on a NATO military convoy four civilians died in Kabul on 10 August 2014. Seven more persons were injured. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the bombing.

Agreement on the formation of a government of national unity

Following mediation by US Secretary of State John Kerry the two presidential rivals, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, agreed on the formation of a government of national unity - irrespective of the still outstanding election results. According to a news agency the agreement they signed does not include any details on the distribution of powers within the future government. The negotiation of these details will be left to a commission to be appointed.

Pakistan

Security situation

The Pakistani authorities reported that Afghan rebels killed four people, including a leading member of the tribal force set up by the Pakistani government in the border province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on 08 August 2014. The army killed two of the attackers.

People killed and injured in riots

The security forces reported that four people were killed and dozens wounded in manifestations of followers of Tahir ul-Qadri, the controversial cleric and leader of the Awami Tehreek Party (PAT), on 8 and 9 August 2014 in Lahore, Bhakkar and Gujranwala. Tahir ul-Qadri said that seven of his followers had been killed. Although the Lahore police is accusing him of murdering a policeman who died due to the riots, ul-Qadri announced a march on Islamabad on 10 August 2014. The march is to take place on Pakistan's independence day and national holiday on 14 August 2014.

In June 2014 Tahir ul-Qadri had returned to his home country from Canada and announced that he will topple the government. Since then there have been repeated violent clashes between his supporters and the security forces.

Iraq

Development of the situation

According to press reports of 06 August 2014 the Kurds in Northern Iraq responded with an offensive to the progress of the IS fighters. The reports said that the Islamic State (IS) had recently threatened to extend its regime throughout the entire autonomous Kurdish region.

On 8 August 2014 the US air force for the first time attacked IS bases in Northern Iraq to stop their advance in the direction of Irbil and the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities.

The press reported that on 10 August 2014 20,000 Yazidi could flee the Sinjar Mountains and were taken to the Kurdish region with the assistance of Kurdish Peshmerga. Further another 20,000 to 30,000 Yazidi who first fled from the Jihadists to Syria had now succeeded in continuing their flight to the Kurdish region in Iraq.

Special forces stationed in Baghdad

On 11 August 2014 the press reported that special forces, allegedly loyal to Prime Minister al-Maliki, took up positions at strategically important places in Baghdad. Pro-Maliki militias had reinforced their patrols in Baghdad the reports said. The police informed that an unparalleled number of army commands and elite forces had been stationed in Baghdad.

Political development

The Baghdad controversy about the formation of the government continues. In the evening of 10 August 2014 al-Maliki allegedly indicated to critics that he is unwilling to renounce seeking a third term in office.

Syria

Security situation/IS expands positions

According to the Syrian Human Rights Observatory 64 people in the outskirts of Damascus died in air raids of the Syrian army on 05 August 2014. These raids had already taken place on the weekend in the eastern city districts of Kafr Batna and Duma. Further reports say that on 05 August 2014 at least 16 people were killed and 79 wounded in attacks of Syrian rebels in Damascus. Reportedly Damascus had been targeted by shells and grenades already in the days before, causing several deaths.

On 7 August 2014 the Islamic State (IS) staged a suicide bombing of a military base near Raqqa, killing at least 36 soldiers and 15 jihadists. IS succeeded in taking the base that was one of the last positions still held by the Syrian military in that province. Further reports say that Tabqa military airport is still controlled by the Syrian regime.

In attacks by government troops and rebels in Aleppo a large number of people lost their lives or were injured on 09 August 2014, the Syrian Human Rights Observatory said.

On 10 August 2014 the Observatory said that after many days of fighting IS gunmen conquered three cities in the strategically important province of Deir ez-Zor from other rebel groups. These towns are Abu Hamam, Al-Qashqiya, and Ghranij from where IS had previously been driven by tribal forces.

Assad reshuffles government

After his re-election President Assad again appointed Wael al-Halqi prime minister and entrusted him with the government formation.

Lebanon

Fighting in border regions

The fighting in the Lebanese border town of Arsal (see BN of 04 August 2014) between the Lebanese military and extremists lasted for five days. On 07 August 2014 Syrian rebels withdrew probably to the mountains in the border area between Lebanon and Syria. The withdrawal followed a ceasefire negotiated by clerics. It is said that prior thereto the Lebanese army succeeded in liberating six (according to other sources -

seven) policemen who had been taken hostage. The fighters took other policemen and soldiers they had captured with them. On 09 August 2014 the Lebanese army reportedly moved into Aarsal.

Hariri returns

On 08 August 2014 former Prime Minister Saad Hariri returned to Beirut. Hariri had left Lebanon in 2011 after his government had been ousted. Hariri met the Saudi king Abdullah on 06 August 2014 and then announced that Saudi Arabia will support the Lebanese army with a billion dollars and that he would oversee the practical application of the aid. However, it is assumed that the real reason for his return is to prevent the Lebanese Sunni to split up in two camps.

Gaza Strip / Israel

On 10 August 2014 Israel and the radical Islamist Hamas agreed a three day truce (to start at 11pm CEST in the night to 11 August 2014). If the truce holds Israel intends to send a delegation for further negotiations on a permanent ceasefire to Cairo on 11 August 2014. The Egyptian government mediated between Israel and Hamas in Cairo. On 08 August 2014 the negotiations had been disrupted following Hamas' refusal to extend the 72-hour truce agreed on 05 August 2014 and its resumption of shelling Israel to which Israel responded with renewed air raids. The Arab League announced to hold a special meeting in Cairo on 11 August 2014 to discuss the conflict.

The Gaza authorities said that over 1,900 Palestinians lost their lives since the fighting broke out on 08 July 2014, while Israel reports a death toll of 64 soldiers and three civilians.

Turkey

Erdogan wins presidential election

After the counting of about 99% of the votes it seems certain that the current prime minister and chairman of the Islamic conservative AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, won the presidential elections already in the first round by gaining 52% of the votes. On 10 August 2014 the Turkish head of state was elected directly by the people for the first time. Erdoğan is hoping for two tenures of five years each and wants to beef up the role of the head of state which used to be mainly a representative one, these changes will require certain constitutional amendments for which the AKP will require a larger majority in parliament than it currently holds. Therefore the AKP hopes to win the additional votes during the parliamentary elections next year.

The two largest opposition parties CHP and MHP named the earlier secretary general of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, as candidate. According to the media he won about 38% of the vote. The leftist and pro-Kurdish candidate Selahattin Demirtas came in third at 10%. The voter turnout reportedly was around 77%.

Egypt

Political parties banned

On 9 August 2014 the Supreme Administrative Court announced the disbanding of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). The FJP is the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood that had already been banned in February 2014. The ban means that the FJP may not participate in the parliamentary elections scheduled for fall. A court decision on the ban of the Salafist an-Nur party is expected for October.

Libyan rebels attack

Libyan rebels attacked a military base in the port town of Marsa Matruh killing five policemen and losing four of their own men on 06 August 2014. The Egyptian-Libyan border runs about 1,100 km through uncontrolled desert areas across which the Islamist rebels in Libya are smuggling arms. The number of their attacks of targets in Egypt is rising, claiming the lives of about 22 Egyptian soldiers in July according to reports.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Opposition leader arrested

On 12 August 2014 around 04:30am the MP and Secretary General of the third largest opposition party „Union for the Congolese Nation“ (UNC), Jean-Bertrand Ewanga, was arrested in his house in Kinshasa. The attorney general charged him with incitement to hatred and slander of the head of state among other things. Although the Supreme Court had ordered house arrest the security forces took Ewanga to Makala prison in Kinshasa. He had voiced his disagreement with a planned constitutional amendment that would allow President Joseph Kabila to remain in power beyond 2016 at an opposition protest rally in Kinshasa attended by several thousand people on 11 August 2014.

Nigeria

State of emergency declared over Ebola epidemic

In the evening of 08 August 2014 President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency over Ebola. Religious leaders should forego major assemblies, schools shall extend the summer holidays. Additional quarantine stations and border controls are among the emergency measures planned. Up to now two people died from the disease in Nigeria, another seven infections are confirmed. Almost 140 people are under surveillance. All of the incidents occurred in the economic metropolis of Lagos (population about 20m). Those infected had been in contact with a man who had arrived from Liberia at the end of July and later succumbed to the disease.

Soldiers regain Damboa

The Islamist terror organization Boko Haram had occupied the city of Damboa (fifth largest urban centre in the north-east of the state of Borno) for about one month. As announced by the defence headquarter the army succeeded in regaining the city on 06 August 2014.

Gwoza taken by Boko Haram

At around 4am on 06 August 2014 the fourth largest city in Borno, Gwoza, was attacked and taken by Boko Haram. An earlier Boko Haram attack around 5pm on the day before had been fended off.

Amnesty International: Army war crimes in north-eastern Nigeria

In a report published on 05 August 2014 the human rights organization Amnesty International (ai) accuses the Nigerian army again of having committed war crimes, including extrajudicial executions, in its fight against the Boko Haram terror organization. The allegations are based on video recordings, photographs, and eyewitness reports which ai had received shortly before while travelling through the north-eastern state of Borno. The video shows for instance, how the throats of five of 16 young men standing in a line are cut with a knife. According to witnesses also the other men who were suspected of belonging to Boko Haram were executed. The uniforms, arms, and testimonies made it highly likely that the perpetrators were members of the army, the report says. ai stated that the Boko Haram conflict has claimed more than 4,000 lives this year.

West Africa

International health emergency

On 08 August 2014 the World Health Organization classified the expanding Ebola epidemic as an international health emergency which means that the organization is entitled to pass global regulations to contain the disease. According to the WHO over 961 people have died from the disease and almost 1,800 are infected. On 05 August 2014 the German Foreign Office has intensified its travel warnings for the Ebola countries Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. There is an urgent warning to refrain from travelling to the region. Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria declared states of emergency. The districts of Kenema and Kailahun were completely isolated in Sierra Leone. The Guinean government closed the borders to the neighbouring countries Sierra Leone and Liberia. Zambia in southern Africa imposed an entry ban for people from the Ebola-hit countries. The Arab airline Emirates was the first major international airline to suspend its flights to Guinea because of the Ebola epidemic. Also the Togolese airline ASky is not serving these countries any-

more. On 04 August 2014 international development banks committed USD 260 million as emergency funding for the WHO's Ebola Response Plan.

Senegal

Protests

Clashes occurred during second day of the trial of ex-President Wade's son on 04 August 2014 when hundreds of his followers tried to force their way into the palace of justice to attend the trial. The police responded with tear gas and dispelled the crowd. The son of the former president and former head of five ministries is suspected of amassing USD 240 million through corruption.

Cameroon

Suspected Boko Haram extremists kill ten

Fighters who are believed to have ties to the Nigerian Islamist group Boko Haram killed ten people in the north of Cameroon. AFP news agency quotes a spokesman of the paramilitary police force as saying that the attackers blocked a road in the city of Ziguine near the Nigerian border and opened fire. One soldier was among the casualties. As recently as the end of July at least 15 people had been killed and one dozen kidnapped in the town of Kolofata in the northernmost tip of Cameroon.

Cholera

Since the outbreak of Cholera in Cameroon at least 75 people died and 1,400 more are infected. The rainfalls favour the spreading of the disease. In Cameroon it is a tradition to visit the family during school vacations which might mean that the infection is carried to the neighbouring regions and countries. The authorities set up a task force and are cooperating with the neighbouring countries to prevent any further dissemination of the disease. The deterioration of the health situation is not only due to the poor condition of the health sector, but also to the increasing number of Boko Haram assaults in Cameroon as well as to widespread malnutrition. About 40% of Cameroon's population of 22 million are living in poverty.

Central African Republic

Interim government resigns

The interim government resigned to make way for a peace government. This move is part of the agreement signed almost two weeks ago in Congo about a ceasefire and a political solution for the civil war.

Despite the truce agreed on 23 July 2014 the country is still controlled by armed groups. Although a peace force of about 6,500 African, 2,000 French and 700 European soldiers are stationed in the country they can scarcely protect the population. Observers keep reporting serious assaults of both parties to the detriment of the population.

Somalia

Al-Shabaab attacks town in central Somalia

An al-Shabaab spokesman announced that the Islamist militia had killed 13 in an attack of an AMISOM base in the town of Buloburde (Hiran region) on 08 August 2014. Somalia's information minister Mustafa Dhurow, however, commended the security forces for successfully beating off the Islamists and said that a number of al-Shabaab fighters had been killed.

In May Buloburde had been conquered by AMISOM units. al-Shabaab remains in control in the rural surroundings.

Serbia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina

More flooding

After the heavy flooding of Serbia and Bosnia in mid-May the region has again been hit by floods. On 05 August 2014 Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia experienced heavy rainfall, hail, and thunderstorms which killed one person in Serbia and did serious damage to roads. Especially western Serbia is affected as well as parts of central and northern Bosnia, some of which had already been flooded in May. In Bosnia's north-east many, mostly minor rivers, again overflowed. 300 people had to be evacuated in the Bosnian town of Zeljezno Polje. The situation relaxed after the rainfalls ceased on the weekend.

At the international donor conference in Brussels in mid-July Serbia had been promised EUR 995 million and Bosnia EUR 810 million, mainly as loans on favourable terms. At this time Serbia wants to draw only EUR 109 million that have been promised as donations, mainly by the European Union. 40 houses are currently under construction in the worst hit Serbian town of Obrenovac with funds from the United Arab Emirates. The European Union intends to co-finance the construction of 129 houses. In general, public assistance is provided only very sluggishly to the Serbians affected by the May floods, causing the citizens of Obrenovac to take to the streets in protest on 06 August 2014.

Ukraine/Russia

Heavy fighting around the rebel stronghold of Donetsk

In the afternoon of 09 August 2014 separatist leader Sajarshenko, self-proclaimed prime minister of the Donetsk People's Republic confirmed the encirclement of the city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine by the Ukrainian army and the national guard in the morning of the same day. The Ukrainian army rejected a "humanitarian" ceasefire he had offered saying that the rebels had to put down their arms before fire would be ceased. Since then the Ukrainian army has tightened its grip on Donetsk yet again. US-President Obama and German Chancellor Merkel warned Moscow of invading eastern Ukraine under the pretence of offering humanitarian aid.

Ukraine

Maidan clearing in Kyiv failed

In the morning of 07 August 2014 about 300 workers of the municipal cleaning service started to clear the tents and barricades on Maidan, the Independence Square, in Kyiv that had been occupied by protesters since end of November of 2013. The occupiers fought back by setting fire to tyres and barricades and by throwing incendiary devices. To protect the municipal workers special police units (battalions "Kyiv1" and "Kyiv2") were deployed. When the occupiers attacked the police with bats, stones and Molotov cocktails they fought back with tear gas. On both sides several people were injured in the clashes and the police and the workers withdrew after about an hour.

About 730,000 Ukrainian refugees in Russia

Based on Russian statistics and its own investigations the UNHCR said on 05 August 2014 that the number of refugees that fled from the fighting in eastern Ukraine to Russia during the first seven months of 2014 amounted to about 730,000. About 168,000 of these had registered with the Russian Migration Agency (FMS), 6,000 of them requested recognition as refugees and about 49,000 temporary asylum.

India

Maoist rebels kill 16 Communists in India

Maoist insurgents killed 16 members of a rival group in Palamu district in Jharkhand in eastern India. A police spokesman stated that the attack of the T리티ya Prastuti Committee (TPC) fighters on 09 August 2014 probably was in revenge for the death of ten Maoist commanders last year.

In 2002 TPC split off from the rebel group Communist Party of India (Maoist). The Maoists reject parliamentary democracy and claim to fight for the rights of the rural poor. They have their strongholds in the economically deprived regions in east and central India. Since the sixties thousands of people have died in the fighting caused by them.

Cambodia

Red Khmer leaders sentenced

On 07 August 2014 the "Extraordinary Chambers in the courts of Cambodia" (ECCC) sentenced the former minister of propaganda "Brother number two", Nuon Chea (88) and the former president, Khieu Samphan (83) to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity. The Phnom Penh court declared that the defendants were among those guilty of expulsions, murders, and executions. These were the first verdicts against political Red Khmer officials since the UN-supported special tribunal took up work in 2006. In the first trial the former chief of the infamous torture prison Tuol Sleng, Kaing Guek Eav, aka Duch, had already received a life sentence.

During the Red Khmer regime from 1975 to 1979 under the leadership of "Brother number one" Pol Pot who died in 1998, at least 1.7 million people lost their lives which was almost one quarter of the country's entire population. The people died as a consequence of forced labour and starvation, were killed by torture or executed.

Myanmar

Petition for constitutional amendment

According to an announcement of 07 August 2014 the opposition party of Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and the opposition group „88 Generation Peace and Open Society“ collected about five million signatures for a constitutional amendment in the entire country. The signatures are to be submitted to parliament. The petition aims at abolishing article 436 which provides that constitutional amendments require a 75% majority in parliament. Since the constitution also provides that 25% of the parliamentary seats are reserved for the military, the military can effectively prevent any constitutional change.

Aung San Suu Kyi intends to stand for the parliamentary elections due in 2015. However, she could only do so, after a constitutional amendment, because at the moment no candidate may have any close family members who are foreign nationals, which is the case of Aung San Suu Kyi.

New Zealand

Asylum is granted for the first time because of climate change

For the first time a country accepted the climate change as a reason for asylum. A citizen of the island state of Tuvalu (approx. 200 km east of Papua New Guinea) is allowed to stay in New Zealand with his wife and children, because his home is about to be flooded by the sea. Tuvalu is no more than two meters above sea level on average. The rising sea level confronted the population of 10,500 with problems like polluted drinking water, loss of harvests and floods. The New Zealand Immigration Tribunal found that because of their age the family's children were especially at risk from the natural disasters and the consequences of climate change.